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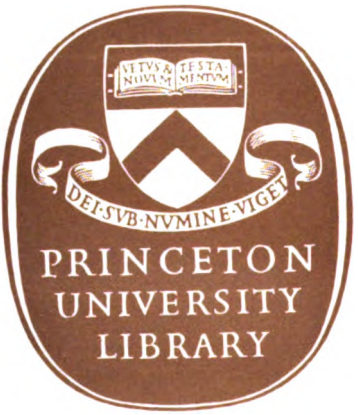


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# THE WIFE'S VICTORY;

AND NINE OTHER NOUVELLETTES.

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**THE MARRIED SHREW; a Sequel to the Wife's Victory.**
**SYBIL BROTHERTON; or, The Temptation.**
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**WINNY.**
**THE THREE SISTERS; or, New Year's in the Little Rough Cast House.**
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Yours Truly
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BY

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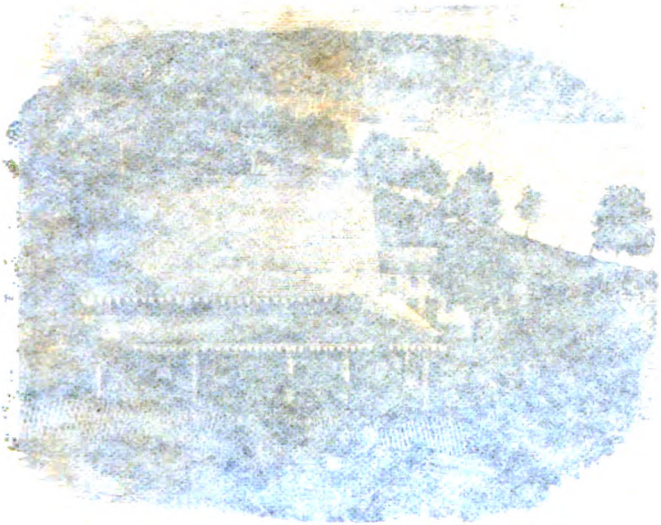

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TO

MRS. MARGARET DOVE,

OF PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY, MARYLAND,

THIS BOOK

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY AND AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED,

BY THE AUTHOR.

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# THE LOST HEIRESS.

## PART FIRST.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE CONVICT'S FAMILY.

It is a fearful night; a feeble glare
Streams from the sick moon in the o'erclouded sky.
The ridgy billows, with a mighty cry,
Rush on the foamy beaches wild and bare;
No bark the madness of the waves will dare!—*Bryant.*

It was the flat, waste coast of A——l county, on the Chesapeake. It was evening, and clouds sat upon the face of the deep, and the spirit of the storm moved on the waters.

Eastward the darkened sea spread till it met the lowering sky. Westward the old primeval forest stretched till it reached the horizon. Between the sea and the forest lay a desert of level sands. It was not dark, for the moon was at its full, and though obscured by clouds, shed a sombre gray light over the scene.

A sullen, drizzling rain was falling, and through this rain, over the dreary coast-road, passed a wretched little wagon, drawn by a donkey, and filled with three weary-hearted travellers.

The first was a woman, of tall and powerful frame, whose fine proportions could not be concealed, even by the voluminous



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brown cloak that wrapped her form. The hood of the cloak, which served also as a bonnet, had fallen back, revealing a well set, resolute head, covered with coarse black and gray hair, and a face with large, strong, clear cut features, and a stern, determined expression. She sat forward in the wagon, driving the donkey. But as her hands mechanically guided the reins, her eyes were fixed with a fierce, devouring gaze upon the distance before her.

The second, her companion, was a young woman of slight and graceful form—or rather it seemed so—for she sat closely shrouded in a black shawl, with her white face pressed upon her whiter hands—bowed, collapsed, shuddering and silent, except when trying to soothe the weeping babe upon her lap, or venturing some anxious, whispered question to the stern driver, as—

"Mother, mother, are we almost there? can you see the lights of the city yet?"

And the dark woman's only answer was her silence, which seemed to be understood by her daughter.

Many weary hours had the wretched little party plodded on their way through the rain and mist. And now they neared their journey's end. And well might the mother send her burning glance with passionate desire into the far distance. And well might the daughter question with eager, breathless anxiety.

Their errand was one upon the issue of which hung life or death. The only son of the elder woman, the husband of the younger, the father of the infant, lay chained and fettered in a condemned cell, doomed to die, before twelve o'clock of the second day, a felon's death upon the scaffold! A crime that had filled the whole community with horror had been traced to his door. And so strong were the circumstances produced in evidence against him on his trial, that the whole tenor of his previous life had been unavailing to effect a verdict in his favor. He was found guilty and condemned to death. The youth, beauty, genius, and misfortunes of the prisoner had produced their natural effect upon the public mind, had strongly inter-

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ested popular sentiment in his favor. Such things ought not to be, perhaps; but such things are. Where a poor, illiterate, misguided, friendless man would have been executed, without a hand or a voice being lifted to save him, this handsome, talented and accomplished youth, found hosts of friends ready to accept and credit his protestations of innocence, and to get up and sign eloquent petitions to the Executive in his behalf. That the previous history of his life had been comparatively good; that he was condemned upon circumstantial evidence alone; that he was the only and beloved son of a widowed mother, whose heart would be broken, and whose gray hairs would be brought in dishonor to the grave by his fall; that he was the husband of a youthful wife, and the father of an innocent child, whose lives would be ruined and disgraced by his unmerited execution—these were the causes set forth with more or less good reason why the sentence of the law should not be executed upon the prisoner. But the Executive of that day was a hard-headed, some said hard-*hearted*, indurated old man, who boasted that he made it a rule, without an exception, never to interfere to arrest the course of the law. And so the friends of the prisoner had given up in despair, and left the boy to his fate.

Only one still hoped—his young wife. And this was the ground of her hope: The old Governor's time was up, and a new Governor had been elected to succeed him—a young statesman whose name and fame made the poor wife's heart thrill with new life and expectation, for he was one who had known want, sorrow, toil and struggle, and who had conquered them and his own destiny, and who was now borne victorious upon the very topmost crest of popularity. It was natural to suppose that his bosom was filled with all gracious affections, benevolent emotions, and generous impulses. He was to be inaugurated into his office the very day before that appointed for the execution of the prisoner. Was it not most reasonable to suppose that his very first official act would be an act of mercy? Youth was always generous and merciful, and this new Governor was young. Was it not likely that he would rejoice at the opportunity of signali-

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zing his coming into power by the salvation of a fellow creature's life? a life the public were so eager to have saved—whose pardon would therefore bring him so much more popularity? And oh! besides! oh! more than all! the new Governor was himself a young husband and father, with a beautiful wife, and a beloved, only babe—would not the pity of his heart grow strong for the wife and child of the poor condemned? Oh! altogether, when she came to think of it, it was unlikely, it was impossible the Governor should refuse to hear her prayers. And so she had urged the prisoner's mother to this journey, and now, as she rode on through the driving rain and mist, her hopes grew so strong by cultivation, that she raised her cowering form, and would not endure to see her mother sitting there in front of the wagon, driving so mechanically, with her burning gaze fixed with such fierce, hungry desire upon the forward vision of the unseen city. She said,

"Dear mother, cheer up—cheer up, mother. Oh! I know that all will be well! The new Governor cannot fail to hear us, and to grant us his life! Oh! yes! All will be well!"

"And yet, Nelly, you shudder and sigh as you say it!"

"Yes, mother, because, oh God! the faintest doubt upon this subject is so horrible!" and the poor girl groaned.

"Hope nothing, Nelly! Hope nothing from what you have advanced! I have found none so proud as the prosperous, and none so heartless as the happy!"

"See, mother! see! the lights of the city! Are not those the lights of the city?"

"Yes, we are drawing near A——, Nelly! Still that wild, eager heart of yours, woman! What is the use of wishing, longing, hoping, fearing about *any* thing in life? 'Tis but three score years and ten at the longest! And 'tis soon over and all is swamped in death! and prince and pauper, king and convict are equal in the grave!"

Nelly pressed the infant on her knees closer to her bosom, as she bent forward and looked into the mother's face. It was white, and stern, and set, but the eyes burned with a wild fire.

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"God preserve her senses!" said the poor girl to herself, as she sank back into her seat.

They were drawing near the suburbs of the city now. Here and there a solitary dwelling house or road-side tavern cheered the lonely, barren desolation of the scene. They drove on with what speed the poor, old, worn-out donkey could be urged to make. And soon the sparse settled suburb was reached and left behind. And soon the boundaries of the city were passed, and the wretched little wagon drew up before a poor but decent tavern.

The elder woman alighted and assisted the younger to descend with her child. And then she gave the old donkey cart to the care of a horse-boy, and led the way into a poor parlor. Her first question to the landlord was,

"Has the new Governor reached the city?"

"No, but he is expected this evening—and the young men of the town have turned out, a hundred horsemen strong, to meet and escort him to the city. They have mustered at the State House, and will march down this road. If you'll sit at the window you'll see them pass. And as for the inauguration of to-morrow—the city is full of soldiers, military companies from all parts of the State, and it is said that it will be the greatest military parade that has been seen since General Washington took his seat! Listen to the boys now! They make a babel of every street," said the host, going to a window and throwing it open. And—

"Hurrah for Hunter! Hurrah for Hunter! Hoo-oo-oo-rah-h for Hunter. Hoo-rah-ah-ah for Hunter," was yelled and echoed and re-echoed by the frantic multitudinous crowd of children, boys, youths and men, who rushed past in crowds to take a stand to see the new Governor enter the city.

"You will be wanting a room for the night?" asked the landlord.

"Yes," answered the elder woman.

"You will be come to town to attend the markets mayhap? There will be great markets for a day or two—prices will be very high while the city is so full of people!"

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"We have not come to market."

"Oh! only to see the parade and get a sight of the new Governor."

"Yes."

"Well! I can tell you that, great as the crowd will be to-morrow to see the Governor take his seat, it will be greater still the day after to-morrow to see O'Leary hanged! Maybe you'll be staying in town till after that—then you'll get to see two sights, and have your money's worth before you go back?"

"Send some woman to show us where we are to sleep," said the elder woman, in order to get rid of her troublesome host.

Nelly had sat down in a darkened corner, with her child on her knee, and her head bowed over it, but she heard and shuddered at the cruel words of the unconscious landlord. He went out, and his exit was soon followed by the entrance of a slatternly maid of all work, who conducted the two women up stairs into a little, low, ill-furnished bed-room, and left them.

"Oh, mother! how can we sit still here waiting in idleness, and know that *he* is imprisoned, chained. Oh, God! alone, unfriended, suffering. Oh! mother, he cannot come to us—he is helpless in his bonds—let us go to him. We cannot see the Governor till to-morrow, mother! Oh! let us go to him!"

"Impossible, Nelly!—the prison doors have been closed for hours. I charge you be patient. To-morrow at the earliest hour of admittance we will be at the prison gates. And afterwards to haunt the steps of the Governor all day and night till he hears us!"

"Oh! but to have got here in time to-night. And how to live till to-morrow?" exclaimed the poor girl, shuddering.

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## CHAPTER II.

### THE GOVERNOR'S ENTREE.

And as we gazed on Ches'peake's heaving tide.
'I never saw so beautiful a night!—*Bryant.*

FROM within us comes often all the gloom or beauty of the scene around us. On that same night, at that hour, and by that road, passed another vehicle, with another party, on their way to the city.

It was a very handsome, spacious travelling carriage, drawn by a pair of superb coach-horses, and attended by an out-rider, mounted on a fine saddle-horse.

The carriage contained four persons. On the back seat reclined a handsome man, in the early prime of life, and a beautiful woman, in her first bloom. Opposite to them sat a neat, pretty mulatto nurse-maid, and on her lap reposed a lovely child, six months old. The babe was well wrapped in a soft, white silk cloak and hood, and a linen cambric handkerchief, of cobweb texture, was thrown partially over its face, to shield it from the night air, without obstructing its breathing.

The blinds of the carriage were let down for a while, to admit the fresh, invigorating air from the salt water—and the fine prospect of the grand, lonely sea, stretched out to infinity under the grand, lonely, eastern sky—and the great black pine forest, like an army of giants, halting, on the west. For this party was happy and at ease, and so they thought the deep-toned glory of the sober, gray heaven and earth beautiful, exceedingly; and fancied that the light fall of the rain made low music on the waters.

It was the mother who at length put down the windows, with an apologetic smile. She, too, inquired—but it was with a beaming eye and joyous tone—

"Are we near the city? Do you see the light?"



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And he answered in an encouraging, cordial voice,

"No, dear Augusta, not yet. We are full ten miles off, and even on such a grand level as this, could not see so far! But never mind, the road is good, the night fine, the horses swift, and we shall be there in less than two hours."

Well might they be happy! Well might they be eager for their journey's consummation. For it was to be a triumph—a well-earned, well-merited triumph!

Daniel Hunter, the Governor elect, was one of those sons of which America may justly be very proud! He was a man of the people—the son of a country blacksmith—"low-born—self-educated"—taking for his sword and shield in the battle of life, simply right, reason and Christian principles, he had fought every inch of his way, through the successive stages of reputation, distinction, and eminence. even to his present high official station.

And she who now bore his distinguished name, and shared his honors, the lady who sat by his side, was one of England's proudest daughters. Not won in the days of his great success, but—the grand-child of an expatriated Jacobite nobleman—by the strangest vicissitudes of fortune, she had been thrown upon Daniel Hunter's protection, while she was yet an infant and he a boy Much trouble of every sort had the young patrician given the boy, the youth, and the man. But he had carried her in his strong arms, above every want, and care, and sorrow, loving her more tenderly for every burden he bore for her sake, prizing her higher for every fault he conquered in her character. And now she sat by his side, his happy wife.

The marriage, on his side at least, was not one of passion. Daniel Hunter had but one grand passion—AMBITION—and even *that* was dedicated, consecrated to high and holy purposes. But from childhood he had loved, served and protected her. And now he cherished her with the old, tender, unchanging affection. He, her guardian and teacher, as well as her lover, had had some difficulty in winning her heart and hand, but when at last she gave them, they were yielded up, utterly, entirely,

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without reservation, with passionate abandonment. He was a man for a woman's worship—it was his right, and he received it.

---

The travellers pursued the same road for more than an hour longer, until, coming to a point where it forked, Mr. Hunter pulled the check-string, stopped the carriage, let down the blind, put his head out of the window, and called to the coachman—

"Take the road to the left, Sampson."

"But why do you prefer the longest and worst road?" inquired the young wife, curiously.

"Because, dear Augusta, I have been confidentially advised that there are a hundred mounted civilians coming down the road we have just left, to meet the carriage, and escort it in triumph to the city—to say nothing of the thousand men, women and children collected a little farther on to see the entree. Now I think, Augusta, that the parade of to-morrow will be quite sufficient without this premonitory fuss. And I consider also, that my dear wife and child are tired and hungry, and need rest and refreshment. And finally, I remember that there is a quiet old couple in a quiet house in A——, who will be more sincerely happy to see us to-night than all that gaping, staring, hallooing multitude assembled to do—*themselves* honor. And so, Augusta, we will enter the city quietly by another road than the crowd expects, and go to our parents' house, and gladden their aged hearts by the sight of the babe they have never yet seen, and prepare ourselves by a calm domestic evening and a long night's rest, for the harassing display of to-morrow."

"But will not the disappointment of your friends make you very unpopular?"

"Not just at this time. It is now the good pleasure of the sovereign people to praise their favorite. They will attribute the best motives to his actions. In this instance, they will ascribe a much better one than that which really actuates him. They will say he eludes parade upon republican principles, and shout for him louder than ever."

"Still I am sorry that their confident hope will be disap-

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pointed, and that they will lose the pleasure of doing you this honor."

"'Honor!' My dear Augusta, you do not understand. Why if to-morrow, instead of being inaugurated, I were to be executed, there would be as great a crowd collected from the very same motive—love of excitement."

This seemed to be an unhappy simile—for when Daniel Hunter had spoken it, both were suddenly silent, from a similar cause. At last—

"There *is* a poor wretch in the condemned cell of the A—— prison to be executed the day after to-morrow, is there not?" asked Augusta, in a subdued tone.

"Yes—I was just thinking of him," replied the Governor elect, in a grave voice.

"And after twelve o'clock to-morrow, you will have the power of signing his reprieve—and so, by the stroke of your pen, saving a fellow creature from the scaffold; what a privilege!"

"And what a responsibility!"

"I do not know the poor man, of course; I only know that he lies fettered in the condemned cell, waiting to die a shameful death; and from my soul I pity him and his friends, whose misery this night stands in such hideous contrast to our own happiness. And my very soul thrilled with joy to-day, when I read in the morning's paper that, 'It is confidently reported that Governor Hunter will meet the public wishes by reprieving O'Leary as soon as he gets into office.' It is a God-like prerogative, that of showing mercy! You will sanctify our own happiness by a deed of mercy to the miserable. You will consecrate your office by making your very first official act an act of grace!" said Augusta, fervently, and in the enthusiasm of her benevolence and sympathy she caught his hand and pressed it to her bosom, and bent forward to catch a responsive glow from his face.

There was none there. His countenance was dark and very grave. His silence was ominous. She trembled and scarcely lifted her voice above her breath, when she inquired,

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"Will you not pardon poor O'Leary?"

"No, Augusta, I will not."

"Alas! I was so *sure* you would."

"You presumed in your ignorance."

"And so, Mr. Hunter, do the public! The pardon of this poor prisoner is confidently expected of you."

"Then public expectation must be disappointed."

"It will make you unpopular."

"A second time to-day, dear Augusta, you have urged popularity upon me as an object. Never do so a third time—never while you live. When did you ever know the desire of popular favor to influence my action? Who would wisely and righteously rule, must not be governed by the caprices of the ruled—it were a paradox."

"Then this wretched man must die."

"I have said it."

"God be merciful to him!"

"Amen."

## CHAPTER III.

### THE GOVERNOR'S FIRESIDE.

Here's the vast city, with its peopled homes,
And hearts all full of an immortal life,
Thousands and tens of thousands beating there;
Strangers from different lands of every hue
And tribe and nation congregating near;
Seamen, the sport of many a distant wave,
And busy merchants hurrying to and fro,
And curious travellers with thoughtful mien;
Grave men of place, and inexperienced youth,
And the doomed prisoner in his darkened cell.—*Mrs. Ellis.*

THE Governor elect, with his family, entered A—— through one of the quietest suburbs, and turned into one of the broadest, finest, and most retired streets.



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The carriage drew up before a handsome dark stone house, set on a hill back from the street, surrounded with trees, and having its grounds terraced down to the level of the side pavement.

Two lamps on posts before the gates illumined the front of the house and the successive terraces.

The groom dismounted from his horse, opened the carriage door, put down the steps, and while his master was alighting to assist his party out, went up the terrace stairs to the house and rang the door bell. In a moment the door was thrown wide open, revealing a lighted passage within, and a number of ladies on the watch, who, when they saw and recognized the travellers, flew out like a flock of birds and met them half-way up with the most joyous welcome, clasping and kissing the stately Governor elect as if he had been the most familiar "Brother Dan" in the world, and folding his wife in their arms with cordial affection, and taking possession of the baby, and passing it from one to the other, with exclamations of love, wonder and delight—though it was perfectly true that there never was a baby seen on earth precisely like that baby, and therefore it is no wonder that all its aunts, uncles, cousins, parents and grand-parents doated on it to fatuity.

"And how are father and mother, girls?" asked Daniel Hunter, as they moved up towards the house.

"Pa is confined to his easy chair with a slight touch of the gout, though we have wheeled him into the parlor for to-night to see you. And ma is well—there she is now," said one of the young girls, as an old lady, dressed in a black satin gown, with a fine white muslin kerchief and cap appeared at the street door.

She was walking slowly and cautiously down to meet her son and daughter. But Daniel Hunter hastened to greet her, and drew her arm within his own, and supported her form, till the others came up, and Augusta had paid her affectionate respects, and had been pressed to the old lady's bosom, and the baby had been held up by the admiring aunties to the view of the admiring grandmother. No! the world was several thousand years old then, but had never produced a "human" baby

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like that before! Grandma elevated both her hands in speechless ecstacy! And all the aunts, uncles, cousins, nurse-maids and footmen held up theirs! And all this enthusiatic appreciation reacted upon the mother's love and pride, and made her admire her baby, and believe in its unapproachable perfection ten times more than she did before, if that could be possible.

The travellers were then conducted into the house, and into a spacious, well lighted, richly furnished family parlor—ornamented with elegant books, paintings, medallions, statuettes, and mirrors that multiplied everything else, and exotics that filled the air with perfume.

In a corner, by the glowing grate, sat an old man in the easiest of easy chairs, propped up and reposing half-buried in and among downy silken cushions. This was old Daniel Hunter, the retired blacksmith, and the father of the Governor elect. He was a grand-looking old man, of gigantic proportions, and fine Roman features, like his son's, crowned by a head of hair like a snow-drift. He was smoking a clay pipe, but laid it aside when he saw the party enter, and made several attempts to rise and meet them, but failed, and at last sank back in his chair.

Daniel Hunter hastened to him, and greeted him with the warmest respect and affection, to which the old man replied,

"The Lord bless thee, Dan'l! The Lord for ever bless thee! So they have made thee Governor at last, lad? Well, well, well, well! who lives long must see much! but I never expected to see this day; the Lord be praised, that he has brought thee to honor, and spared me to see it, boy! Governor! Well, well! I didn't expect this thirty years ago, when I begged an old packing box from Jimmy O'Leary, the tavern-keeper, and put rockers to it for a cradle for you! Jimmy was the greater man in those days! Well, but how times are changed! My son is the new Governor, and Jimmy's son is—well, well!"

While the childish old man is babbling in this way, the young sisters have crowded around Augusta, proffering their services. They insist that she shall not have the trouble of going up stairs to change her dress, until she retires for the night. Nor, in-

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deed, is any change necessary. In her luxurious carriage she has contracted no travel dust. And so, of the young sisters—one takes off her bonnet and shawl, and carries them up stairs, while another draws forward an easy chair to receive her, and grandma herself relieves the darling baby of its cloak and hood. And "Times are changed!" chimes in the old man. Yes, times were changed, indeed, with them; but not more so than with a vast number of our countrymen and women, whom their own industry and talents, or those of their children, have lifted from the dust and set in high places.

I heard a very old friend of this family, who had known them from the first, say that it seemed to her strange and delightful to remember what that old lady had been, and to see what she was now—to remember her the bare-footed mistress of a rural hovel, who daily carried her husband's dinner to the forge, and who would spend all the afternoon in gathering a basketful of wild fruit or nuts, and walk ten miles to market the next morning to sell them for three shillings, to get little Dan a pair of shoes. And to see her now, arrayed in that rich dark satin dress, seated in the velvet easy chair, and misbecoming neither—presiding, with not undignified ease, over her son's town house.

But the old man is still babbling pleasantly, while we are digressing, and at last he remembers that there is some one else in the world besides that matchless son, the stately Governor elect, who stands there by his chair, listening to his childish talk, as respectfully as if it were the wisdom of Solomon—and he calls out, chirpingly,

"But where is my dear Augusta? Where is Mrs. Daniel Hunter?"

Augusta left her place, and went and paid her affectionate respects; saying that she had been waiting to attract his notice for some time, but would not interrupt his agreeable chat with Mr. Hunter.

"Aye! she is more considerate than she used to be, Dan—that is thy work. Thee always had the knack of making people stop to think a bit. But where is the wee lassie?"

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The babe was brought by its grandmother, and laid upon his knees.

"Aye! a fine child!" said the patriarch, taking out his glasses, wiping them slowly, and setting them on his nose—"a *very* fine child, indeed! quite an uncommon fine one! But who is she like? Can thee tell me, grandmother?"

The old lady was sure it was the express image of grandfather himself.

At which grandfather, who entirely believed it, was wonderfully pleased.

The girls who followed, and clustered around the baby, like flies around a drop of honey—were entirely faithless upon the point, as they turned their glance from the yellow, shrunken visage of the most venerable of patriarchs, to the tender, delicate, blooming face of the most beautiful of infants. And then the girls, united upon this point, were divided upon another—namely, having decided who the baby was *not* like, they fell to disputing who it *was*. Harriet and Elizabeth were certain it was like its beautiful mother. But Lucy and Letitia were positive it resembled its father.

"How can you say that, when her eyes are of the deepest blue, like dear Augusta's!" exclaimed Harriet.

"Blue! just hear the girl! when I will leave it to any human being with eyes in *their* head, that the child's are black—black as midnight, like brother Dan's!" said Letitia; and to prove it, she snatched the babe from its grandfather's knees, and carried it under the full blaze of a chandelier, where the little one winked its eyes at such a rate that it was impossible to tell their hue.

To decide the matter, the cap was pulled off, to see if the color of the hair would throw any light upon the subject.

"There!" exclaimed Harriet, exhibiting a little, glistening, golden head of hair. "There! I told you she had dark blue eyes, like her beautiful mamma's, and so she has, for her hair is light, and everybody knows light hair always goes with blue eyes!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Letitia. "Oh! that's too good!

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Just see how she's caught herself! 'Light hair always goes with blue eyes,' does it? And dear Augusta's eyes are dark blue, and her hair bluish black! Ha! ha! ha!"

"Girls! girls!" cried the old man, in a shrill voice, "girls! I am going to have that child put to bed! It's not a wooden doll, nor a puppy dog, to be pulled and dragged in that way. Augusta! has thee no mother's heart in thee? Daniel Hunter! does thee see how they're treating thy heiress?"

Augusta, who had been uneasily watching their rough usage of her darling, now came forward, and took the frightened but patient little creature in her arms, saying,

"It is late, dear girls, for little Maud's eyes to be open, let me ring for her nurse, and take her to bed."

No! Augusta must not fatigue herself. *They* would see the nurse put Maud to bed. And Elizabeth ran and rang the bell And Lucy wanted to know whether the baby would want thickened milk or cracker panada, and said she knew how to make both.

And grandmother came forward, and told them all to hush, and to stop, for that she knew more about children than all the rest put together—hadn't she "raised" eleven? And so saying, she took the babe from Augusta's reluctant, but unresisting arms, and carried it out of the room, the girls following, as naturally as if they were needles, and the child a magnet. Augusta went too, sure in her heart that grandmother was going to give it Godfrey's Cordial. And Daniel Hunter remained, standing with his elbow resting upon the mantlepiece, listening to his father's talk.

And, meanwhile, in a spacious upper chamber, there is a pleasant little family scene going on. The babe, who had firmly closed its lips, and utterly rejected Godfrey's Cordial, lies sleeping quietly enough without it.

And its little crib, of Grecian pattern, with fine, rich, lace curtains, looks like some beautiful shrine or veiled altar.

And Augusta reclines upon a lounge, for "Augusta must rest before supper," say all the girls, and grandmother endorses it.

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And grandmother herself sits in an arm-chair, near Augusta's lounge, and makes her tell all about the baby, from the day of its birth to the present night.

And the girls bring out their offerings to the infant—fruits of many an industrious hour, lovingly bestowed upon the little stranger. Harriet produces a richly embroidered robe, the work of her own fingers; Elizabeth displays a superb white cashmere cloak, worked with silk, and a hood to correspond; Lucy, half a dozen worked muslin caps; and Letitia another robe, quite as handsome as the first.

And when all these have been examined and praised and gratefully accepted, grandmother sends Letty to her room to bring "that little red morocco trunk." And when it comes, she takes it on her knee and unlocks it, and produces a dozen pair of little socks, knit by herself, of the very finest lamb's wool yarn, and of assorted colors, white predominating. And,

"There!" says the old lady, with not unjustifiable pride, "there! maybe they are not so showy as the girls' work, but I reckon you'll find them just as useful. These are such socks as you can't buy out of the stores, for any money!"

"No, indeed, dear, good grandmother! Money can't buy such things as these—only *love* can," said Augusta, catching the old lady's fat hand and pressing it to her lips. And the old lady raises her wistful eyes doubtingly to her daughter-in-law's face, and says,

"Aye, you like me better than you used to, don't you, Augusta?"

"Yes, dear madame, and I hope it is the same with you. You *know* me better than you once did!"

"Aye! I like you better, because you *are* better!"

Now, although Augusta took this equivocal compliment kindly, as it was meant, yet it was not quite just. It was an innocent mistake of the old lady's. Augusta had always been good—not so near perfection as she was now—but always well disposed. It was grandmother herself who had been far wrong, and was now—partly by Augusta's patience—brought right. Not always

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had this worthy plebeian family so loved and served the young patrician lady who even in her tender infancy was thrown upon their protection. Once a fierce jealousy and hatred had reigned in their bosoms, and blinded their moral vision, so that nothing Augusta looked, or said, or did, seemed good in their sight. You shall hear, after a bit. I have not time to tell you now, nor is this the place, for the supper-bell is ringing, and the old lady is rising and putting the things out of her lap with a parting rebuke on the subject in this wise,

"Well, girls, in *all* your doing, you have done nothing for Augusta herself—not even worked her a collar."

"Oh, *haven't we?* We *did* intend to keep it a secret, but—well, I reckon if Augusta will open the upper drawer of her bureau, she will find something her maid didn't put there!" exclaimed Elizabeth.

"The sweetest worked night-cap," said Letitia, smiling.

"Hush, *Tongue!*" exclaimed Lucy, nudging the speaker, and thus betraying her own personal agency in the matter.

"Well, even if you *had* forgotten her, I reckon I know who had not. Here, my dear," said grandmother, drawing from the bottom of the red morocco trunk several pair of the finest white lamb's wool hose. "Here, my love. It took me nearly all the summer to knit these—for you see they are so fine I could only knit on them in the day-time; they are like a cob-web almost, for I remembered all your little dainty notions, and I knew you would not wear them else. And now you really must put them on, my love, and wear them under your silk stockings. And now let us go down to tea. Hatty, you great big, strong thing, why don't you give your sister-in-law your arm? You know she is tired and weak—traveling tires everybody, and nursing makes a woman weak, and Augusta's had to undergo both to-day. If you'd only feed that child on thickened milk, and give it Godfrey's Cordial, you'd find it wouldn't wear you out so. You don't like to? Well, when you've had eleven, as I have had, you'll be glad to—that's all," concluded the old lady, leading the way down stairs.

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They passed through the parlor in going to supper. The old man still sat in his easy chair, and his son, the Governor elect, still stood by his side, leaning his elbow upon the mantel-piece, and listening to his talk. Augusta, as she entered, caught the fag end of the conversation. The old man was saying,

"I think thee *ought to*, though, Dan, indeed I do. His father was a good friend of mine, and a good friend to thee, too. Aye, I mind when he gave me the shoe box to make a cradle for thee, Dan! You can't say *that* was bribery and corruption, because he couldn't o' foreseen thee'd ever have the power, Dan. Thee'll do it, I reckon?"

"No, father."

"*No!*" repeated the old man, bringing down his cane emphatically—even authoritatively—"but the people expect it of thee, Dan! The people expect it of thee, Dan! Thee owes them something for making thee a Governor. Thee should try to please thee employers, Dan—as I used to admonish thee, long since, when I 'prenticed thee to the lawyer! Thee'll do it, like a good lad, Dan?"

"No, sir, I cannot."

"Cannot? Thee *can!* Thee's got the power!"

"Then I will not."

"*Thee will*—it *must* be so! The people will have it so! And you know, '*Vox—Box—Fox*—what is it, Dan? The—the *text* you know you used to put to your paper?"

"'*Vox populi—vox—*'"

"Yes! I know now! *Fox poplar—box of dominoes*—'the voice of the people is the voice of God.' Now, Dan, that used to be thee own text. Now if thee believes that, thee ought to obey it."

"Father, we out-live most of our youthful enthusiasms, and learn to modify many of our opinions. For instance, I do not now think that the voice of the people always *is* or always *has been* the voice of God. Think you that it was, when it cried, 'Crucify him—crucify him. *Release unto us Barabbas?*'"

"Ah, Dan! ah, Dan! thee's a good orator, and that's what



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helped to make thee Governor. But oratory don't make it feel a bit pleasanter to have poor young O'Leary hung! Ah, Dan! I'm afraid; I'm afraid. But I always heard prosperity hardened the heart! Lord bless my soul, grandmother! ain't supper ready yet? I'm all but starved!" concluded the old man, when he perceived that his wife and daughter had entered.

The old lady announced supper on the table. And the old gentleman, with the help of his son, arose, and supported by the Governor elect on his right side, and leaning on a cane with his left hand, slowly passed into the supper-room.

Here some of the sons of the family joined them, and all gathered around the well-laid table. And still the old man harped upon the subject of the convict, turning the conversation into that channel and keeping it there. And all around the table expressed their deep sympathy as they buttered their waffles. Some of them, we know, had already pleaded the cause of the prisoner. And now you could not have decided whether they were the most interested in the subject of the pardon or the pancakes. And yet they were very sincere in their sympathy. Such is nature.

Only mark this—that while they who so eloquently expressed their pity, and so zealously pleaded for a pardon, ate and drank with a good relish for their food; he who firmly refused to reprieve, scarcely touched a morsel, but sat grave and pale; and judge if you please, who at heart felt the most painful sympathy.

But Daniel Hunter was a man in a million, and weighed justice and mercy in the scales of conscience. But to-morrow the most portentous trial awaits him. He must encounter the pleadings of the convict's broken-hearted mother, and grief-stricken wife. He would not sacrifice conscience for family love or popular favor, will he sacrifice it to their awful sorrow? He would not yield to wife or people; will he yield to *them*?

In the pauses of the conversation at the supper-table, distant sounds from the city were heard, and "Hurrah for Hunter" was shouted till the welkin rung!

They left the supper table and assembled in the parlor for

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family prayer. The patriarch read a portion of the Holy Scriptures, and then knelt with all his household, and led their devotions. When this was over, the family separated for the night.

The old lady and her girls accompanied Augusta to her chamber to see that everything was there that could possibly be needed for herself or the child, previous to leaving them for the night. They found the babe sleeping sweetly, and the pretty nurse-maid sitting by the crib, sewing by the light of the night-lamp. The room was all sweet, pure, and quiet, and they stole on tip-toe up to the crib, put aside the lace curtain, and gazed with the devotion of love upon the little sleeper, murmuring to themselves and to each other: "The beauty," "The darling," "The sweet innocent," "The angel."

No wonder! It was the only baby in the family, and the only baby that had *been* in the family for the last eighteen years. And this very baby had been waited for five years! Yes, its parents had been married five years, and this was their first child. Of course it was *bound* to be a prodigy and an idol! There was only one Mordecai who stood at the King's gate and refused to fall down and worship the Princess. And that was Old Solon, the porter at Howlet Hall, who avowed that they had better take care—that the child was only a vessel of wrath after all—conceived in sin and born in iniquity, like every other human baby; and babies worshipped as that was, were very apt to——and there he shook his head, leaving an infinite margin of possibilities!

But now grand-mamma and aunties Hatty, Betty, Lee, and Letty, hover around the baby, gaze on it, bless it, and then steal on tip-toe out of the room, for fear of making a noise to wake it. They need not have done so—for if it were in the power of sound to awaken little Miss Hunter out of her fine sleep of infantile fatigue, the noise outside the house must have done it.

I do not know whether, as the children tell us, little birds carry news, but certainly some unknown agent advised the thousand expectant sovereigns of A——, that their one subject had come

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quietly to his town house. And their majesties were not to be baulked in that way of their triumph. Ever since the first premonitory symptoms of the approaching storm had been heard at the supper-table, the hurrahing, shouting and tramping had drawn near and nearer the house, which was now at length surrounded. And calls of "Daniel Hunter!" "Daniel Hunter!" "The Governor!" "The Governor!" were hallooed and yelled, echoed and re-echoed in every tone and key, from the shrill treble of childhood, to the deep bass of manhood, and the quavering falsetto of age.

At this time Daniel Hunter was supporting the feeble steps of his old father in ascending the staircase. The staircase led to a wide passage way, running through the middle of the upper story, from front to back. And at the end of this passage was a fine balcony, over the portico in front of the house.

"Daniel Hunter! Daniel Hunter!" shouted the crowd for the fiftieth time. Easing the old man down upon a chair near his own bed-room door, the Governor elect passed up the passage and went out upon the balcony. They were still thundering, "Daniel Hunter! Hunter! Hunter!"

"'Hunter?' My friends, *you* are the hunters, and I the *hunted* upon this occasion," he said, as he advanced to the front railing.

A tremendous shout rent the air. They would have applauded a very poor pun from their favorite just now, and *that* was really not a bad one. The two lamps that I spoke of before were still burning on the posts, and revealed his form distinctly to the crowd.

There he stood, a glorious man! one of nature's rulers—the noblest work of God! There he stood, with his royal brow uncovered.

"Three cheers for Daniel Hunter, *the Governor!*" exclaimed a leading voice among them. And the voices of thousands responded to the challenge.

"Three cheers for Daniel Hunter, *the Man of the People!*" sang out the same sonorous voice. And the welkin rang to the shouts that followed.

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"*And now*, three times three for Daniel Hunter, THE BLACKSMITH'S BOY OF THE BLUE RIDGE!" thundered forth the leader.

And every hat was off, and every arm raised on high, and every voice of thousands responded in deafening shouts.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! for Governor Hunter!"

Again, "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! for the Man of the People!"

Once more, "Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah! for THE BLACKSMITH'S BOY OF THE BLUE RIDGE!"

And exhausted and hoarse with so much shouting, the crowd became suddenly silent. And now appears a new figure on the scene. The old patriarch, forgetting his feebleness, or raised above it, comes leaning on his cane, and tottering to the door of the balcony. And he lifts his noble but trembling form erect, and says,

"Aye, *that's me! I'm the blacksmith himself!*"

And there he stands, leaning on his stick in the doorway, infinitely pleased, while Daniel Hunter, taking advantage of the transient silence, addresses his audience with a short, neat, pithy speech, and good-humoredly dismisses them. And after another valedictory "hurrah," they disperse to their homes, leaving the Governor elect and his family to seek their rest.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE CONDEMNED CELL

Oh! my son, Absalom! my son! my son Absalom!
Would God I might die for thee! Oh! Absalom! my son! my son!

THE young wife of O'Leary might weep and wail, but her sorrow was nothing to the fierce, bitter, burning passion of grief and terror—the very agony of grief and terror—that fired the



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mother's heart, and scorched up the fountain of her tears through all that live-long night and garish, maddening day!

At the earliest hour of the morning that the prison rules would sanction, the mother was at the gates waiting for admission. Nelly was with her. There could scarcely have been a greater contrast in any two human beings than in these two women, as they stood waiting at the jail-gates.

Norah O'Leary, the elder, was a woman of about forty years of age, but whose tall, gaunt figure, dark complexion, and harshly-cut features made her look full ten years older. Her strong black hair was mixed with gray, her hollow, deep-set eyes were dark, fierce, strained and blood-shotten; her forehead was low, her nose large and aquiline, her lips thin and compressed, her chin long and slightly protruding. The chiselling of her features exhibited a great deal of grim, self-reliant strength.

Ellen O'Leary, the younger, was a mere girl, scarcely twenty years of age, whose slight figure, fair complexion, and soft, delicate features, made her seem still younger. Her face, with its broad, fair forehead, softly shaded by dishevelled brown curls, its raised eyebrows, and its large, hazy blue eyes, in their deep, circular hollows, and the small, quivering lips and chin—was the face of an innocent, grieved, amazed child!

Both these women were dressed in black—mourning for the elder O'Leary.

While they waited, looking at each other in sad silence, the artillery was fired, ushering in a day of glory for at least one man.

And on the signal the flags of all the public buildings and the shipping suddenly run up! And as suddenly the stars and stripes streamed above the prison!

The women raised their eyes to see the national symbol of freedom, joy and triumph waving over the prisoner, the condemned, and the despairing!

But soon the gates were opened, and they presented themselves for admission. An under turnkey conducted them up the broad, paved walk that led to the principal entrance.

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The prison was a large, square, strong edifice, built of gray rock. And even on entering the central hall, they were turned sick with the closeness and fetor of the confined foul air, and they felt with a sharp pang that their beloved was suffering it all the time. The turnkey led them down several long, dark passages, first to the warden's office to get permission, and the key to enter the condemned cell. The jailor, who seemed to be a kind-hearted man, arose from his seat and came to the door to tell them that there was a clergyman with the prisoner now, and that they might go on at once to him. And when he saw more distinctly their faces, and noticed their despairing looks, he bade them in a cheering voice,—

"Oh! take heart! take heart! there are strong hopes—almost a certainty—in fact I may as well *say*, certainty of a pardon!"

The young wife looked up with a sudden shiver of nervous joy, as this meteoric hope crossed her heart. She could not speak, she could only wait, with dilated eyes and lips apart, in expectancy to hear more.

The mother raised her head, and struck her strong, piercing eyes into those of the speaker, and asked,

"What authority have you for saying it?"

"Ma'am, it is generally reported and believed!"

"Is that all?"

"No, ma'am, it is announced in all the papers."

"Officially?"

"Why you see, ma'am, it is not a proper subject for an official announcement, and even if it were, you know it could not be made yet a while, because the Governor is not Governor until his inaugural oath is administered at twelve, and therefore, of course, he could not make any official announcement."

The mother clasped her hands together in speechless anguish.

"Oh, but, ma'am, it is well understood by everybody that Governor Hunter has passed his word to give a pardon as soon as he comes into office."

"Oh, God! but the time is so short! so short! and the danger so imminent," said the poor wife, wringing her hands.

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The mother only ground her jaws together to suppress the fierce groan ready to burst from her bosom. The peril, the uncertainty, the suspense was so terrible! She motioned to the turnkey to lead the way, and followed him along the narrow passage up a flight of stairs, and along another dark, close passage to the criminal ward, about midway of which was situated the condemned cell occupied by young O'Leary. The turnkey paused before this door, opened it, and held it while the mother and wife of the convict passed in.

The cell was a small, arched apartment, with whitewashed walls, with one narrow grated window opposite the door. Its furniture was a small cot, covered with a coarse white counterpane on the right hand side, and a little stand and a chair on the left.

The convict sat upon the side of the cot, and the clergyman stood near him as if in the act of taking leave.

William O'Leary, the prisoner, was very unlike his mother. He was not yet twenty-three years of age, of medium height, of slender, yet elegant and firmly knit frame, of fair complexion, with light hair and blue eyes, and a Grecian profile. The great charm of his presence had once been a singular grace of motion, and a sweet joyousness of expression and speech which won all hearts that approached him. But since he had been in prison, confinement, foul air, and cruel anxiety had jaded and worn him until he was extremely pale and thin. Yet now, as he saw his mother and his wife enter his cell, the old "sweet joyousness" lighted in his countenance, and burst forth in his tones as he started to meet them, and folded them alternately to his bosom, exclaiming,

"Mother! Nelly! *dear* Nelly! *Dearest* Nelly! don't cry, darling! It is all over! the danger is *all* over! Don't cry so, dearest Nelly!"

And his mother groaned from her bursting heart,

"My son! My son!"

And his wife sobbed in silence on his shoulder.

"Yes, mother! poor mother, the agony is all over! The

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Governor has promised a reprieve! I shall be pardoned, mother! pardoned for a crime I never committed. It is, however, almost as bad as being hanged for it; only there is the hope of my innocence being proved some day. Yes, Nelly, my little darling, the reprieve is expected this very afternoon, and then, mother," he said, standing straight and stretching his limbs as far as the fetters would admit, and taking a long breath with an eager anticipation of relief; "then, mother, I shall leave this place! And, dear Nelly, I am free to confess, that I am very tired and sick of it! Yes, indeed! Oh, very tired and sick of it, indeed! Here! sit down by my side on the cot, mother, and sit you on the other side of me, dear Nelly, for *I must* sit down. You don't know how miserably weak this wretched place has made me!" The prisoner sank back on his seat, and his wife and mother took the places on each side of him. The clergyman took his hat to retire. "Don't go, Mr. Goodrich! Don't go!" said William. "I beg your pardon, I—I was so glad to see my mother and Nelly, and so excited with the thoughts of the good news I had to tell them, that I—I entirely forgot you were strangers. But it is never too late to do well, until we are under the sod, so allow me to introduce you. Mother! this is my kind, most excellent friend, the Reverend Mr. Goodrich! And sir, this is my mother, and this is Ellen, my wife, whom you see has cried her eyes out for nothing."

The two women arose, and the good priest shook hands with them, and then would have left the family together, but the poor mother held and clasped his hands, while she thanked him in a broken voice for his kindness to her son.

And Will himself, lifting up his thin, but joyous face, exclaimed,

"No! don't go, dear Father Goodrich! Many and many a hopeless day and night have you stayed to share my grief—now stay and see my joy—I have nothing to say to my family, and they have nothing to say to me which you are not welcome to hear, so stay and share our reunion—well I know how much pleasure it will give your kind heart! Oh! but—I forgot—

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perhaps you would like to go and see the inauguration? or maybe you have some other engagement?"

"No, my son, I have no desire to witness the inauguration ceremonies to-day, and no engagement presses upon me, yet I think it is better you should be left with your friends for a little while. I will return soon," said the priest, with a lingering motion of departure, for the widow still grasped his hand, and looked in his face with a searching gaze.

"*Is it true, sir?* Can we let our hearts rest upon it—I mean the reprieve?" she asked, in a low, husky voice.

The good priest looked at her gravely and compassionately.

He was a mild-looking old man, with a pale face, and thin, silvery hair—the gaze of his dim blue eyes was soft and lingering, and the tones of his voice slow and very gentle.

"Alas!" he said, "the future is *always* uncertain—we can only hope and trust, knowing that, whatever the issue is, all is for the best, though we may not be able to see how!"

The strained eyes relaxed and fell; the lips closed with a spasmodic catch, and the poor mother sank back in her chair.

"Will is innocent! You know, Father, Will is innocent!" said, Nelly, weeping afresh.

The priest looked pitifully at the poor young creature, who had involuntarily, unconsciously, clasped both arms around the form of her husband, and was holding him with a trembling pressure, as if to protect him. And while he was considering what to say to comfort her, the jealous mother's heart misinterpreted his silence, and she exclaimed, almost threateningly,

"Father! my son is guiltless! *You know* my son is guiltless!"

—"Of the crime imputed to him—*yes*—as guiltless as the angels!" said the Father.

"And it would be *murder!* It would be *murder!*—to—" the mother could not speak the fatal word! it would have scathed her lips!

'William will be saved! He will be saved! There is not a doubt of it, Father! say! *is* there a doubt of it?" asked the young wife, clasping her hands, in an agony of entreaty.

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"My dear daughter, my poor girl, try to be calm and patient, for your husband's sake. It is uncertain, as yet, my poor child. I should do bitter wrong to deceive him. It is true that a reprieve is called for by acclamation! and that the highest and most influential personages in the city will present a petition. In addition to that, my poor, best efforts shall be given. I am going now to the mansion-house, and I shall wait there to seize the first opportunity of obtaining an audience with the Governor. I am fully convinced of William O'Leary's innocence of the crime for which he has been condemned. I shall urge that conviction upon his Excellency with what force and earnestness I am master of, and trust in heaven for the result."

The young woman lifted her head from her husband's shoulder, and took the hand of the Father, and pressed it to her lips in silence, and then let it fall.

But William O'Leary, in a cheerful tone, exclaimed.

"Oh! there *is* no doubt of a reprieve! Every one who has visited me for a week past, has assured me of it! And Mr. Thomas, the warden, showed me a paper to-day where it was announced! What makes you all look so grave? Oh! I know! Nelly always was afraid of shadows—dear Nelly is so timid! And mother has but little faith! And Father Goodrich has but little—hope! But *I* have courage, hope and faith! and so am easy about to-morrow! Only I wish it were here, for I am very sick of this! Never mind, dearest Nelly! By this time to-morrow we shall be far away from this hideous place! far away in the deep, sweet woods, on our road home! Mother!" he asked, with sudden eagerness, "did you bring the donkey-cart?"

"We came in it, Willie."

"I am glad of that!" he exclaimed, joyously, "for indeed, mother, I did not want to go by the stage-coach. I know it will be full of strangers going home from the inauguration. And they might find out the poor convict, and gaze him and his little wife out of countenance. And besides, the stage-route is over the dusty turnpike. Oh! yes, indeed, I am very glad you thought of bringing the cart, dear mother. Now we shall have

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such a delightful ride home, with you and Nelly and the baby. We will take the country road through the forest, Nelly, and we will stop at the Cool Spring tavern to rest. Mother! the people at Cool Springs don't think so ill of me as to think———?"

—"Oh! no, no, no, the family would stake their souls upon your innocence!"

"Yet still, on second thought, mother, we will not stop at Cool Springs—there might be some strangers there at this busy time, when all the State is alive, and they might recognize me. There were so many people at my trial. Oh! mother! Nelly! I thought—man as I was—that I should have died under so many pitiless eyes! But I mean to forget that! It shall pass away like a bad dream. I will never allude to it again! and mother and Nelly, after we get out of this horrid place, please never do you! No, we will not stop at Cool Springs! I had rather not meet strangers; but we will do better than that—we will eat our dinners in the woods, as in

"'The days when we went gipsying.'"

Poor mother! she shuddered to hear him talk so confidently. Her conscience bade her say to him,

"Oh! be not so sanguine! Give some thought to the other possibility. Prepare for the other darker doom, lest it take thee unaware;" but how could she teach her lips to dash his hopes in this way? She could not. She even repressed her sighs and groans, lest they should damp his spirits. And Nelly looked from one to the other, and was fain to hope with her young husband.

"And, mother!" he went on, confidently, "as I do not expect the pardon till late this evening—for the Governor must have time to get through his inaugural ceremonies, and his State dinner, which will last until night, before he can attend to business; and as I shall not get out from this hateful place *till night* —why I wish you and Nelly to make every preparation for our early start to-morrow. And, mother! you may think it childish, but I feel as if I would like to take just such a lunch, in just

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such a way as we used to when Nelly and I were girl and boy, and we used to go picnicing with you and father, and the neighbors! So, mother! just get a linen bag and have a chicken roasted, and a beef tongue boiled, and some cold biscuits, and a pie—and put them all in the bag, and put in three bright tin-cups to dip the water out of the spring; and I know the place where we will stop to rest. It is that deep dell in the forest, you know, Nelly, where there is a spring as cold as ice, with a gigantic elm bending over it, and a brook that sings as it runs over the gravel, clear as silver. I think I never saw gravel so silvery, or water so pure and cold, or shade so deep as that is! I have dreamt of it at night. I have written some verses about it, too. It seems to me that, well as I loved the forest-dell before, I never felt its beauty so deeply, I might say so poignantly, as since I have been shut up here. Ah! you who are outside, you do not know how to prize your blessings. No matter how poor and despised you may be—no matter if you are a slave or a beggar, you have fresh air and sunshine, and the sight of the sky and earth, and the free use of your limbs! I think *one* good will come to me from my being shut up here—it is that I shall for ever more enjoy freedom and nature with a thousand-fold enjoyment!"

"Mother, we must start just at sunrise, to-morrow! It is the most delightful hour for beginning a journey! Nelly, what is it that Grey says about

"'Brushing with hasty steps the dew at peep of dawn?'

Repeat it for me!"

Nelly reflected a moment, and then said,

"'At the peep of dawn,
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn.'"

"Yes! that is it, Nelly! We, too, will meet the sun! Yes, mother, we can start at six o'clock, reach the edge of the forest by the time the sun is well up, and if we take the journey easily and pleasantly, by one o'clock we can reach the forest-dell, where



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we can stop and rest under the great elm by the spring. And we can afford to spend an hour pleasantly there, and start again at two, and travel leisurely, and reach our dear home by six in the evening. Mother! Nelly! I think I shall never care to leave that sweet forest-home of ours again! I shall never care to set foot within a city again as long as I live! I will hunt, fish, plough, reap, do anything, rather than go back to the city again! By six to-morrow evening we shall be home! that blessed home! sitting by our own hearth, caressing our dear children! Ah! Nelly! why hadn't you brought little Willie?"

Poor Nelly looked distressed. She could not tell him that little Willie lay very ill with fever, at home. She knew not what to say.

The less scrupulous or more devoted *mother* spoke, saying,

"You know we were in haste, and we could not be burdened by both children on the journey."

"Little Willie! Well! I am glad he is hearty! You told me so, Nelly! did you not?"

"*I* told you so, Willie! Yes, the child is very well, we left him in the care of Aunt Abishag—you know he could not be in better hands."

"No, indeed! But how is poor old Aunt Hag?"

"Very well, and very anxious to see you!"

"Oh! I *know* she will be glad to see me! I fancy how she will put her apron up to her eyes, and cry. *She* never believed me guilty!"

"No, indeed! If you were to hear her hard wishes on the judge and jury!" said Nelly.

All fell suddenly silent now, oppressed by the memory of that awful judge and jury.

Willie recovered himself first.

"Mother, you must buy a new stuff gown for Aunt Abishag! Stay, what color does she like? Oh, orange—buy her an orange-colored bombazet, mother. And, I forgot! you will want some money for your preparations to-day," he said, getting up and crossing his cell, and pulling the little stand drawer open.

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He took from the drawer a small roll of bank notes, handed them to his mother, sat down again on the side of the cot, his wife and his mother on either side of him, and smiling, began again to talk of the next day's return home, how delightful it would be, how happy they should all be at home. Then he spoke of Willie, his two-year old son, and of his little six-month's daughter, and "You must bring her to see me, this afternoon, Nelly, indeed I can't wait till to-morrow to see *her;* why didn't you bring her with you this morning?" he said.

"The little creature has had a very fatiguing journey, she was sound asleep when we left her," said Nelly, "but you shall have her this afternoon."

While she spoke the great clock of the prison struck twelve, and the mother and daughter arose to go.

"You are not going to leave me so soon?" asked William O'Leary in surprise.

"Yes, dear Willie, we must go, we have been away from the poor child since six o'clock this morning."

"Who did you leave her with?"

"Only with the maid servant."

"And you've been here since six o'clock! It doesn't seem to me so long."

"We spent more than an hour waiting for the gates to open."

"And yet you've been here with me more than four hours. It does not seem like *one* hour. Can't you stay a little while longer, just a little?"

Nelly looked distressed. Between her feelings as a wife and mother she found it hard to decide.

The elder woman came to her assistance, saying,

"*Mother's love* is the strongest love in the world! Nelly, go back to *your* child, and I will remain here with *mine.*"

"Will that content you, Willie?" asked Nelly, hesitating.

"Yes! oh, yes! go back to the poor baby, Nelly! But mind! bring her to me this afternoon—do you hear?

"Yes, I will," said Nelly, tying her bonnet, and stooping down to receive his parting kiss. And then she left the cell.

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When the mother and son were left alone together, the former inquired,

"Did not Father Goodrich promise to return again this afternoon?"

"Oh, certainly, he promised to be back soon. But really I do not expect to see him until this evening. I have no doubt on earth that he will be detained at the Government house until the reprieve is made out and signed. I firmly believe that the Governor will confide its delivery to Father Goodrich himself. As, indeed, who so proper to be the messenger of pardon as the priest—he who is the messenger of God's pardon to sinful man? Therefore it is that I do not look for Father Goodrich until near night. For, as I said before, the Governor has his honors and his dinner to get through with and digest."

The mother remained some time after this with her son. Indeed she was not in the least hurry to depart.

William O'Leary's prison-dinner was brought in.

William O'Leary ate, talking gaily all through the meal. Norah forced herself to eat, lest her failing to do so might distress him. At last the meal came to an end, and the turnkey piled his empty dishes upon the tray, and took them away; and the cell door was again locked on the outside. The retreating steps of the official died away in the distance, and they, the mother and son, felt themselves once more alone.

"It is such a farce, locking that door *now*, when they *know* that in a few hours I shall be free to walk out of it!" said William O'Leary, laughing.

His mother did not laugh, but feeling constrained to say something, lest her trouble should be observed, she remarked, evasively,

"It is a form, you know, my son!"

"Yes, yes! Well, I suppose we must bear with it an hour or so longer."

An hour passed on, and then lifting up his head, he asked,

"Isn't it time for Nelly to be back?"

"Hardly, my son—the way is long, and the child is heavy."

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The young man soon began to betray signs of such debility, that his mother spoke to him, and tried to prevail on him to lie down. At first he resisted her persuasions, declaring that he felt very well, and could not rest till the return of Father Goodrich, and that he also felt as if he *never could* lie down again on that cot in that cell. At last, however, wearied out by debility, he suffered himself to be persuaded, and laid himself down upon the prison cot, laughing, and saying that it did not matter, as it was the last time. And soon, worn out by excitement, his eyelids drooped and drooped, and then fell and sealed themselves in sleep. But he started out of slumber, and asked,

"Mother! Nelly not come yet? What o'clock is it?"

"Four, dear. She'll not be here for an hour yet."

And his eyelids drooped again and closed in sleep. Soon starting out of this, he exclaimed,

"Mother, if she should come while I am asleep, wake me up, will you?"

"Yes, my dear Will."

Once more his heavy eyelids sank upon his heavy eyes, and he dropped into a deep sleep, from which he did not start again.

And Norah sat and watched him; never before had the change in his countenance been so manifest. She smothered a sob to see the pale, thin face, with its hollow cheeks and sunken eyes —the pale, pale face,

> "That did a ghastly contrast bear
> To those bright ringlets glistening fair."

She sat and watched until five o'clock. And then the sounds of approaching steps in the lobby fell upon her ear, and the key was turned in the lock, and the cell door thrown open to admit Nelly, who entered, bringing in her infant.

Norah arose softly, placed her finger on her lips, and pointed to the sleeper.

Nelly entered quietly, and came and sat down on the foot of the cot.

But at the same time, while Nelly's back was turned towards



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him, the turnkey, standing within the door, telegraphed to Norah to come out. With a sinking heart the mother arose, and, without a word or sign to Nelly, left the cell.

The turnkey locked it, and beckoned her on to follow him, saying, as they went down the lobby,

"Father Goodrich is waiting in the warden's room to see you."

With trembling limbs, scarcely able to bear up her tottering form, Norah followed her conductor down the stairs, and through the long passages leading to the prison office. He opened the door, and held it open for her to go in.

There were but two persons in the office, the warden and the priest. The kind-hearted warden looked grave, and old Father Goodrich sorrowful. On meeting their looks, Norah reeled on her feet, and must have fallen, but for her almost superhuman effort of self-command. The good priest came to her, led her to a chair, and seated her.

"I have just left the Governor," he said.

She looked up in his face, and read doom there.

"It is over! The Governor refuses to pardon!" she said, in a low, hollow voice.

The old priest took her hand, and said,

"I told you this morning, when that poor boy was so confident—"

"Oh, he is *confident still!* I left the poor, innocent soul sleeping a sweet sleep, trusting in the mercy of his fellow-man! Oh, God! oh, God!"

"Be calm, be calm, my daughter, and hear me. I said I told you this morning, when your son was so confident, that the future is always uncertain. I repeat it now—for there is as much to be hoped as there ever was to be feared from the uncertainty of the future—while there is life there is hope. An effort will be made this evening by some of the most eminent men in the State, who are also very influential political friends of the Governor. They will present the petition, which has not yet *been* presented, you are to remember; *my* plea having been

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only a verbal one, intended to influence his mind favorably towards the prisoner before the formal petition should be presented."

"And he refused you!"

"My daughter, I had little influence. I was presuming. I over-estimated my powers of persuasion."

"Yet you carried a widow's prayer for her innocent child's life—for her only child's life, which he held in the hollow of his hand, and refused to give!"

"I take it that Daniel Hunter is a man very hard to be moved from a stand he has once taken," said the warden.

"He holds my dear child's life in the hollow of his hand, and refuses to grant it! He refuses to pardon! The accursed tyrant! When *he* comes upon his death-bed and cries for pardon, may God hurl his soul to perdition for an answer."

The priest and the warden started. It was absolutely terrific to see the black storm of grief and rage that whirled in her countenance.

Nothing was said for a few minutes by either. And, indeed, nothing was afterwards said by the warden, who was a mild and timid man for a jailor, and who was now frightened into silence by the blast with which his only words had been received. At last the old priest spoke mildly,

"My daughter, Daniel Hunter is no tyrant—you mistake. In this country, under this government, he *could not* be, if he would; and under any government, he *would not* be if he could. No! Daniel Hunter is a humane and upright man; but one who does not permit his own passions and emotions, or those of others, to govern him. What I sent for you for, was, not solely to tell you of my own fruitless errand; but to advise you to another course. You, and especially your daughter Ellen, must, if possible, see the Governor before the petition is laid before him."

"Oh! do not think but we intend to do that in any case. It was *that* which brought us to the city yesterday in such haste, before we even suspected that others were busy in the poor boy's cause, and another petition was prepared."

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"You intended it, then?"

"Of course! of course! Do you think we would leave *anything* untried to save him? I only waited, Father, for your coming before setting out on the errand myself."

"Humph—I was to tell you that there is a possibility that you may not be able to obtain an audience with his excellency; or that, obtaining one, you may not be able to induce him to grant your petition. In view of this, I advise you to see——. There is a lady—" he said, breaking suddenly off; "there is a lady, and sometimes in this world of ours, it has been known to happen, that where the valor of the brave and the counsels of the wise have been mocked, a lady's word has decided the destiny of empires and of individuals. And that, too, when the lady has been neither very fair, nor good, nor wise. And this lady that I tell you of, is all the three; is very fair, and good, and wise. She is Mrs. Daniel Hunter, the wife of the new Governor. You and Ellen must see her this evening. You must strongly enlist her sympathies in your favor. I feel sure that all the influence she possesses will be used in your behalf. And remember that her influence, I may say her power, is very great, greater with his excellency than that of any other human being alive. She is the woman that can lead the lion, if any created being can. And remember, that after every other petitioner and counsellor has been dismissed, and the doors are closed, *she* will still have the ear of the Governor through the night. And what may not her power accomplish? I assure you, your best hope under Heaven is in her."

The priest had spoken earnestly as he felt.

And Norah O'Leary sat with her arms stretched forward together upon her knees, and her hands clasped convulsively, with her dark, stern face raised, and her fierce eyes fixed upon his face, devouring every word and look.

The warden sat behind them at his desk, listening, and slowly and sadly shaking his head. But happily they did not see that.

"Father," said Norah O'Leary, "how soon must I go to the mansion house?"

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"As soon as you possibly can. It is now a little after seven o'clock. You must see the lady before she leaves the house to go to the Inauguration Ball. Alas! that such contrasts should be! That such rejoicings and such wretchedness should exist, side by side! And yet we would not have it *all* wretchedness either. Nay, God forbid! Though we are full of sorrow and heaviness of soul, let us thank God that others are happy and light-hearted!" said the good priest.

Norah O'Leary had risen to her feet. Her face was positively haggard to ghastliness with the misery that was in it.

"Father!" she said, in a hollow voice, "I am going now to my poor boy's cell, to get Nelly, and to bid him good-night. Father! for God's sake do not tell him of your failure! If you cannot see him without betraying the truth, do not go near his cell till after it is decided! Let him hope! Oh! let him hope on a little longer! perhaps he need never despair. He does not expect you till late in the evening, Father, and so he will have no suspicion from your absence. Do not go near him till I come back, Father!"

"I will do as you wish," said the priest.

"Sir," she said, turning to the warden, "if I should get the reprieve late, after hours, could you not still, for once, admit me?"

"I will procure an order from the Marshal to do so," answered the warden, bending his pitiful eyes upon her. And then he called a turnkey to attend her to the condemned cell.

When they reached the door—

"Wait until I come out again," she said; "I shall not be long."

The official unlocked the door, and the sweet, joyous laughter of a child broke on their ears.

Norah entered the cell, and there, upon the side of the cot, sat William O'Leary, dancing his child in his arms, and laughing heartily at its gleeful laughter.

Nelly sat by his side enjoying the sport! evidently inoculated with his own confident hope. What a sight! As soon as he saw the door opened he tossed the laughing child once or twice, and then threw it into its mother's arms, exclaiming joyfully,

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"Here Nelly! take the babe. THE REPRIEVE IS COME!"

But when he saw that only his mother entered, he suddenly sobered down, saying, quietly,

"Father Goodrich not come with the pardon yet! Well! it is just as I thought and said. He'll not be here till late; for I really do suppose his excellency has not left the dinner-table yet; and there may be a dozen more complimentary and patriotic speeches to be made, and a dozen other toasts to be drank, before the Governor rises. Don't you think so, mother?"

"Yes, my dear Willie. These State dinners, we know, are heavy, tedious things!"

"*Very* heavy and tedious to *us*, mother! whatever they may be to those at present enjoying them! I wonder how long they will keep it up?"

"I trust not much longer, Willie; but we can't tell within an hour or so how long gentlemen may sit over their wine."

"Especially at a Governor's first State dinner, eh, mother?"

"I suppose so?" said Norah O'Leary. She was frightened at the swift passage of time—frightened lest she should not be at the mansion house soon enough to see the Governor and his lady before their departure to the Inauguration Ball. Every minute was invaluable, yet she hesitated to leave him. It seemed like tearing soul from body to tear herself from him *now*.

"Nelly!" she said, as composedly as possible, "it is time for us to be going, my dear."

"Going? You will stay with me till the reprieve comes?"

'My dear Willie! it may not come till late, *very* late. And you know it is not safe for women to pass through the city streets at night, full as they are now with drunken and vicious men?"

"True! very true, indeed! And it was selfish and inconsiderate in me not to think of it! You must go."

Nelly was busy wrapping up her child, that struggled and crowed in her arms, and thrust its little hands out eagerly to the father, longing for another romp.

"Give her to me! I'll toss her again!" said William, laughing, as he took the babe and threw it up and down, until it fairly

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screamed with joy. Then he gave the babe to her mother, and bade them good-night; saying, with a sort of doleful good humor, "I shouldn't wonder if I had to stay in this place all night after all! But *any* how, if the reprieve comes to-night at *any* hour, however late, you may expect me at your lodgings!" He folded Nelly to his bosom, but when he would also have embraced his mother, Norah, with a low, "God bless you," turned away. She dared not trust herself to that tenderness.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE PETITION.

Mercy is not itself that oft looks so.
Pardon is still the nurse of second woe.—*Shakspeare.*

THE last speech has been made, the last toast drank, and the last guest has departed—the State dinner is over at the Government House; and Daniel Hunter has sought the retirement and seclusion of his library, there to collect his thoughts, and compose himself, after the tumult and excitement of the day. The lamps upon the tables have not been lighted, and he is well contented that they are forgotten. After the glare, and crowd, and noise of the day, he finds the darkness, and solitude, and silence of the hour very soothing to his jaded senses and perturbed spirit. And he sits alone for nearly half an hour. And then the door opens and a footman enters, with wax candles, and proceeds to light up the room. And in a moment every corner of the sumptuous library is thrown into view. Daniel Hunter sits where he has thrown himself on first entering—in a large, deep arm-chair, near one of the tables. The footman having accomplished his errand, retires; but almost immediately reappears, announcing, "Mr. Bomford, the Marshal of the State." And the State's Marshal enters, and advances up to the Governor, and bowing, says,

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"Mr. Hunter, I crave your excellency's indulgence for my intrusion at the present hour, but my mission is one of the utmost importance."

"Mr. Marshal, I am happy to see you. Take a seat, and let me know how I can serve you."

The Marshal lays upon the table, before the Governor, four cards, saying,

"Sir, the gentlemen, whose names you will see upon these cards, request an audience upon a matter of life and death."

The Governor lifts the cards, one by one, and reads,

"William Storrs, Bishop of M——," "Robert B. Turner, Chief Justice of the Supreme Court," "Major General John Ryder, U. S. A.," and "Commodore Walter P. Rutger, U. S. N."

"It is the petition," said the Governor. "Mr. Marshal, bring them in."

And the Marshal bowed and retired. A minute elapsed, and the official returned and introduced,

"The Right Reverend Bishop Storrs." "The Right Honorable Robert B. Turner." "Major General Ryder." "Commodore Rutger."

The Governor arose to receive them, and with his hand resting on the table, bowed, saying,

"Gentlemen, I am very glad to see you! Pray be seated."

A footman in attendance drew forward chairs, and the visitors seated themselves. A minute of silence elapsed, and then Daniel Hunter, who had remained standing, said,

"Gentlemen, will you be so good as to inform me in what manner I can be so happy as to serve you."

The venerable Bishop of M—— arose, and going up to the table, laid upon it a folded paper, saying,

"Will your excellency grant me your permission to read this petition, signed by numbers of the most respectable of the citizens of M——?"

"It is the petition for O'Leary's reprieve?" said the Governor, interrogatively.

"It *is* sir."

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"Do me the favor to read it, reverend sir. And pray resume your seat in the meantime," said the Governor, resuming *his*.

The venerable prelate sat down, and unfolded the document, and commenced the perusal. The Governor turned towards the reader an earnest, attentive countenance. The petition set forth at large, and most logically and eloquently, the causes why, in the opinion of the petitioners, the sentence of the law should not be executed upon the prisoner. It was signed by so large a number of persons—all of the first respectability—that the Bishop only turned the pages, and showed the Governor the length of the list. When the reading was concluded, the prelate laid the document on the table, saying,

"Your excellency has heard all we have to advance. I have only to add, on behalf of my friends here present, and myself, that no small interest in the fate of the prisoner would have brought us to your presence on such an errand."

The Governor bowed to this remark, and turning towards them all, inquired,

"Have any of you a correct report of the prisoner's trial, gentlemen?"

Chief Justice Turner drew a pamphlet from his pocket, and walking up to the table, laid it down, saying,

"I thought of this exigency, and provided myself."

The Governor took up the pamphlet, and said,

"If you will permit me, gentlemen, I will look over this."

"Certainly! Certainly!" said Judge Turner, speaking for the others. "We would not have you to do anything unadvisedly, and without full understanding of the facts."

Daniel Hunter examined the evidence leisurely and thoughtfully, and then laid down the pamphlet by the side of the petition, and remained silent for the space of several minutes, which seemed to his company as many hours. At length he spoke,

"Gentlemen, I cannot too strongly avow my sense of the humanity and kindness of heart that has brought you here this night. Nor can I adequately express to you the pain I feel in being compelled to refuse your petition."



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Here an expression of deep pain came upon the faces of the visitors, and was reflected in that of the Governor. He went on to say,

"Gentlemen, I had made myself thoroughly well acquainted with the case of William O'Leary before to-night, and from my soul I believe him guilty! To-night I have heard your petition, and I have referred again to the minutes of the trial to see if there was anything that in the first reading had escaped my attention, and which should yet influence my decision in the premises. And I find nothing new here. The trial has been conducted with the due formality, and with the utmost deliberation, impartiality and humanity. The guilt of the prisoner seems to me to be an indubitable fact. I cannot have the slighest doubt of it, nor do I think it possible that any one else can. Gentlemen, I think that the judge and jury have performed their duty in convicting and sentencing this man. I am glad that they have done so—that no false sentiment of compassion has unnerved the stern hand of justice. Mercy to the guilty is too often cruelty to the innocent. The pardon of a murderer is a deed pregnant with terrible responsibilities. We know not *how much* the hope of impunity tempts to crime! Let the consequences of crime to the criminal be sure, awful, unchangeable, irresistible, and many a reckless man, who now gives way to his headlong passions, would hold them in some check, and many a plotting villain would hesitate and turn back from the meditated guilt. Tell me, if you please, that the fear of punishment is an improper instrument of reformation—and I will answer you that it is the only motive that can be brought to bear upon many minds—also, that the laws do not attempt to *reform* the guilty, but to *protect* the inoffensive, not to *regenerate* the heart, but to *restrain* its guilty passions from breaking into overt crime. The law is not *reformatory*, but *restraining*—'a terror to evil doers.' Only the GOSPEL is reformatory. The time *may* come when moral suasion shall govern the world, but the time has *not* come yet, nor will it be hastened by the abolition of just punishment and *impunity to the criminal.* Yes, the time *may* come when

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moral suasion will govern the world, but the world must be *prepared* for it first—a generation from infancy up must be educated in its spirit, and we must begin, *not with criminals, but with children*. At present the law must reign. For some time past I have regretted to perceive a moral cowardice upon this subject prevailing in the community—they shrink from the stern duties of justice, and in their false pity of the guilty, grant them that impunity which leaves the innocent and the inoffensive exposed to their passions. In this instance, I repeat, I am glad that judge and jury have had the moral courage to convict the criminal. I am glad that neither the youth, beauty nor genius of the accused, nor his most interesting family relations, have been eloquent enough to turn aside the sword of justice. They have done their stern duty, and, gentlemen, with God's help, I will do mine!"

"Duty be d——d!" exclaimed the rude sailor, Commodore Rutger. "'Of all the cants that are canted in this canting world, though the cant of hypocrisy may be worst, yet is the cant of "duty" the wretchedest.'" And he wiped his face furiously, and left his seat, and stamped up and down the floor, and finally came back and threw himself into the chair again.

Daniel Hunter received this outburst with dignified composure, only privately resolving, in case of its being repeated, to ring for a footman and have him shown the door. But the honest old tar recovered himself, made an apology, and silently resolved to keep within bounds for the rest of the evening.

"Gentlemen, have you anything farther to advance upon this subject?" asked Daniel Hunter.

One might have thought, indeed, that they would have little to urge after hearing what had been said. Yet not so—not without another effort would they desert their protegé.

Chief Justice Turner went and sat down by the Governor, and spoke to him of the trial—of the condemnation of the prisoner upon circumstancial evidence alone—of the well known fallibility of such kind of testimony—of the numerous cases in which innocent men had been condemned and executed under

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circumstantial evidence, and whose innocence had been manifest only when it was too late to save them from unmerited execution. He spoke of an aggravated case of the kind which had come under his own knowledge in the course of his legal experience. And he begged the Governor to pause and consider what would be his feelings if he should now persist in refusing to grant a reprieve to the prisoner, and after the execution, the dead man should be discovered to have been guiltless of the crime for which he suffered.

Daniel Hunter listened with respectful attention, but when the Chief Justice had finished speaking, he answered,

"At the trial of O'Leary, all this that you have advanced was most eloquently urged upon the consideration of the jury by the able counsel of the prisoner, and yet the jury found him guilty. I think that they were right. I cannot annul their deed. In most criminal cases, sir, especially most murder cases, we have nothing *but* circumstantial evidence to guide us. And to rule such evidence out would be to stretch the positive protection of the law over ninety-nine criminals out of a hundred. It would be to patent subtlety, to grant impunity to the deeper and more artful villain, and leave the simpler and less deliberate one exclusively to suffer."

The Governor ceased speaking, and Chief Justice Turner coldly arose, and asked of his companions,

"Shall we go?"

And all arose to their feet. But Gen. Ryder spoke up, in short, blunt, hearty tones, saying,

"Mr. Hunter, what *I* came here for was not to argue upon the *policy* of the thing, but upon its *humanity*, and to tell your excellency that the prisoner is but a youth—hot-blooded, passionate, rash, and that if he shot his man down in a rage, it is no more than you, or I, or any man might have done! And that therefore we ought, in some sort, to make his case our own, and not to visit his act with too severe a punishment."

"General Ryder, I am sorry to differ with so gallant an officer, and so humane a man as yourself. But it is precisely *because*

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you, or I, or any man may be tempted to such an act, that the *temptation of impunity* should not be added to the *temptations of passion.* Should this young man escape just punishment, there are many young men in this State who will give the freer rein to their angry passions—who, if he is executed, will feel it necessary, in view of such an awful penalty, to curb their impulses. When the retributions of the laws are known, and felt to be certain, inevitable, irresistible, the laws will be obeyed."

The venerable Bishop of M—— said,

"Mr. Hunter, you have spoken at large of the merits of *justice*, will you hear me say something in favor of the divine beauty of *mercy?*"

And then he spoke of all men as sinners, in the sight of God, and of the Divine mercy that offered pardon and redemption.

Daniel Hunter answered,

"I may forgive my individual foe, but must not screen a felon from just punishment. Besides, he who said, 'Unless ye forgive men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your trespasses,' said, also, 'I came not to *destroy* the law, but to fulfill,' and that law which he referred to, ordained that 'He who sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed,' that 'the murderer shall hang on a tree.' If that man had murdered my brother, I might forgive my individual wrong, but should not interfere with the course of justice."

"But if the *condemned* were your brother?" suggested the Commodore, brusquely.

"If guilty, he should suffer, though our mother interceded for his pardon," said Daniel Hunter.

And they looked upon his face, and saw that he would have done as he said.

The faces of his visitors exhibited disappointment and disapprobation.

Daniel Hunter had risen from his seat. His own countenance was very grave and mournful. Addressing his audience in serious tones and measured accents, he inquired,



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"Gentlemen, will you allow me to ask you a question?"

"Assuredly, Mr. Hunter," replied Judge Turner, speaking for the rest.

"Can you take it upon your consciences to say that this man is innocent?"

There was a dead pause.

He repeated the question, taking them individually,

"Bishop S——, I ask you, reverend sir, whether you believe this man to be guiltless?"

"We are *none of us* guiltless, Mr. Hunter."

"It is enough. General Ryder, how say you, sir?"

"Governor, I did not come here to ask *justice* for an innocent man, but *mercy* for a guilty one!"

"I have your answer, sir. Judge Turner, I inquire of your honor, whether in your opinion this man is innocent of the crime for which he is to suffer?"

"Governor Hunter, we are not here to try the case, but to intercede for the prisoner."

"I understand you, sir! Commodore Rutger?"

"Confound it, Governor, *I* want the boy saved, that's my opinion!"

Daniel Hunter remained silent for a moment, during which the gravity and sadness of his fine countenance deepened. Then he said,

"And *my* opinion, gentlemen, is that you have slightly mistaken either me or my privilege. The prerogative of pardon, vested in the Executive, can only be properly exercised, when, after sentence has been passed, it is discovered that some injustice has been done the condemned; as when he has been convicted upon insufficient testimony, or by a partial judge or corrupt jury, or when circumstances have come to light to prove his innocence, or to throw a strong doubt upon his guilt. No other consideration should influence the Executive. Under all other circumstances, it is his duty to sustain the court in its action, and to see its sentence carried into effect."

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## CHAPTER VI.

### THE LADY'S DRESSING ROOM.

To each his sufferings—all are men
Condemned alike to groan:
The prosperous for another's pain,
The wretched for his own.—*Anon.*

WHILE this scene was going on in the library of the executive palace, Mrs. Daniel Hunter sat in her dressing-room, on the second floor of the same mansion, preparing for the inaugural ball of the evening. It was an airy, spacious chamber, elegantly fitted up and well lighted. Augusta sat on a dressing stool in front of a high psyche mirror. She was attended by her pretty maid, Stella. Her sister-in-law, Letty, already attired in her pretty, simple evening dress of white crape and white roses, was also in the room, hovering around the lady, and adding here and there a finishing touch to her dress or hair. Augusta's toilet was now complete, except the clasping of the jewels—a magnificent set of *her* family diamonds that had recently come into her possession, but which she seldom wore, because she somehow felt or surmised that Daniel Hunter disapproved such princely display, and better loved to see her adorned with flowers, or at most, with the pale, oriental pearls, his bridal gift, which so well became her fair complexion and black hair. But upon this occasion, Augusta deems that diamonds are not inappropriate, and her dress being now completed, she stands up to allow her sister, Letty, the childish pride and pleasure of clasping them on. And Augusta Hunter, as she stands there with one small hand resting lightly upon the dressing-table, is, without the diamonds, a very royal looking woman. Her form is tall, well proportioned, and well developed. Her features are regular, her forehead high and pale—in contrast to the straight, intensely black eyebrows, and long black eyelashes, and the shining black masses of ringlets on either side of her face. Her dress is of gold-colored satin

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brocade, with low neck and short sleeves—relieved with falls of delicate lace—her beautiful arms and neck are very slightly shaded with the lace. And now Letty clasps the diamond bracelets on her arms, fastens the necklace around her neck, puts the barbaric ear-drops in her ears, and lastly, sets the light tiara on her black hair—and as the sparkling circlet spans the space between the two shining black masses of ringlets, and blazes above her brow, Letty clasps her hands in silent admiration. She has no words to speak the impression made upon her.

But just then a rap was heard at the door. Stella went to see who it was. A footman stood without, saying that two women had called to see Mrs. Hunter, who refused to go away, and insisted upon being admitted. Augusta looked and listened with surprise and curiosity. But Letty said, impatiently,

"Tell the man to send the woman away, Stella! This is a pretty time of night for such visitors. Some one who wants some petty office or other secured to some son or brother, or sweetheart, and wants your interest in it, Augusta; and are determined to be in time. Let them wait a little. Tell the man to send them away, Stella."

"No," said Augusta, "many of these petitioners have anxious, almost breaking hearts; I know it—the least I can do is to hear them. Tell the man to admit them, Stella."

But even when Augusta spoke, some one without exclaimed, hurriedly, nervously,

"Mother! I know that voice—I know that voice! I know it, though I have not heard it for fifteen years. It is Lady Augusta Percival's."

And when the door was opened by the footman to admit the two women who had silently followed him, Nelly O'Leary sprang foremost—and then hastily controlling her violent impulses, hurried nervously forward and sank at the lady's feet. Augusta looked at her in extreme surprise, which was not lessened as the light of a slow recognition dawned in her countenance, and,

"Ellen Falconer! *Dearest* Ellen, can this be really you;" she exclaimed, with dilated eyes and arched brows.

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"Yes, Lady Augusta, it is I, my wretched self!"

"Rise, dear Ellen, rise! Tell me what is the matter with you. Stella, wheel forward a chair here. Sit down, dear Ellen, sit down. You tremble so much. A glass of water for her, Stella. Take it, Ellen, it will calm your nerves."

Nelly had sunk into the chair offered, and Mrs. Hunter still remained standing, with one hand resting upon the dressing-table. Nelly quaffed the water presented to her by the maid, returned the glass, and seemed somewhat calmed by the cold sedative.

"Now tell me how I can help you, dear Ellen."

"Thanks, Lady Augusta!"

"Nay, Ellen," said the Governor's wife, half-smiling, "I have long since abandoned contending for the title so desperately held in my childhood—having learned at length that it could not be imported and naturalized with myself."

"And you are no longer Lady Augusta?" said Nelly, with a transient interest in the question.

"My English relatives address me so in their letters, but it is not correct. I am not, as a citizen of this country, 'Lady' Augusta."

"But I thought you got your grandfather's estate?"

"Yes, but could not import my title with my personal property. Enough of this. How can I serve you, Ellen?"

Recalled from her momentary wandering Nelly sighed deeply, and said—continuing her manner of address by force of habit—

"I made a mistake in entering this room, Lady Augusta, but now that I am here—"

"Tell me what I can do for you?" said Mrs. Hunter, seeing that her visitor paused and sighed deeply.

"First of all, before I dare ask anything else, forgive me for the miserable past!"

"I had forgotten whether there is anything to forgive, and would rather not recollect," replied Mrs. Augusta, as a shadow fell on her brow.

"Well, Ellen! Go on!"

"I said I came here by mistake. I was in search of Mrs.

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Hunter, the Governor's wife. I suppose you are her visitor? Will you be so kind, Lady Augusta, as to procure an interview for me?"

Augusta regarded her with calm surprise, saying,

"I am Mrs. Hunter. I thought you knew it."

"You?"

"Certainly."

"Stop," said Nelly, as a light full of promise seemed to break on her. "I have heard this new Governor arose from the humblest of the people. Can it be possible that he is one we once knew as Daniel Hunter of the Forge?"

"I thought every one knew that."

"Lady!" said Nelly, suddenly rising and coming forward, and sinking again at Augusta's feet, "I came here to plead for my husband's pardon—for the pardon of William O'Leary, now in prison under sentence of—"

The sight of Augusta's face and form suddenly froze the prayer upon the young wife's lip.

Augusta reeled and shivered as if under the effect of some stunning blow, and now her elbow rested on the table, her head bent upon her hand, her ringlets concealed her face, and her whole form bowed over the table, and she murmured, in a choking voice,

"Oh, God! is it so? Can it be possible? Was only this wanting? You, Ellen Falconer? You married to this man, and he to die so soon?"

So sudden and great was the distress of the lady, that Ellen herself turned comforter, saying,

"But he is *not* to die, lady! he is innocent! We know that, but we want the reprieve to-night that the suspense may be over, and we may go home to-morrow and leave this dreadful place behind forever."

"Oh, Ellen! Ellen!" was all the lady could say, bowed down in pity and grief.

"We *know* that he is going to be reprieved, because the Governor has positively promised it, lady!"

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"Oh, Ellen! God pity you, Ellen!" was all the answer.

But instantly Norah O'Leary, who, till now, had stood near the door, attracting but little notice, and supposed to be only an attendant of the young woman—Norah O'Leary came forward, and brushing Nelly away as if she had been a fly, exclaimed,

"She knows nothing about it! She is a child, or worse, a fool, whom no one permits to see or hear the truth! She is self-deceived, and deceived of others!"

The stern rudeness of this woman's manner restored Augusta to some degree of composure and dignity. She lifted her head, stood up, and prepared to listen.

"Hear *me*, madam, I am his mother."

"I attend to you," said Mrs. Hunter.

She spoke hurriedly, and with some natural distraction and disorder of manner—

"My poor son is innocent, madam! Innocent of murder as that babe of yours sleeping in that crib!"

Augusta shuddered strangely, and in spite of herself, at such an allusion to her child in such a connection. Norah went on—

"But innocence, madam, is no protection in a world like this. *She*, Nelly I mean, feels sure of a reprieve, and only begs that it may be hastened. Alas! every one else knows better! First, indeed, our hopes were raised, and we were almost assured of a pardon—popular rumor and the public papers assured us of it—but this evening I have learned that the Governor has rejected every overture for a pardon."

"Oh, no! not so! Oh, God, mother! not so! You never told me so! It cannot be! It cannot be!" exclaimed Nelly, suddenly springing forward and catching Norah's hand within her own, and looking wildly in her face.

"Be silent, Nelly, and compose yourself," she said, roughly shaking her off.

Nelly retreated to a distant cushion, and sat down upon it, burying her face in her hands, and smothering her groans and cries.

The mother resumed—

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"To-night a last effort has been made by some of the first men in the State. I have been told that it has failed. I have no hope left but in you. You have great power with Daniel Hunter, lady. I come to entreat you—to *pray* to you to use it and save my boy's life!" and the old mother held up her clasped hands.

"Alas! would to Heaven I had the power you ascribe me. I would use it for your sake." Augusta's countenance expressed great sympathy with the sufferer, but as she entirely recovered her self-possession, her manner seemed cold to the excited woman, who exclaimed,

"And you refuse to intercede for me? You a mother? and to have such a stony heart for a mother's anguish? How know you, woman, what may be the fate of the babe in yonder crib? how *he* may sin and fall, and sue for mercy?"

"It is a *girl*, thank God!" said Augusta, thrown into a momentary tremor by this second act of bringing her idolized child into the wretched connection.

"A girl, is it? Then pray God, lady, to have mercy on you and on her! And show you, meanwhile, mercy to *my* child! For God promises mercy only to the merciful, and will visit the sins of the father upon the children!"

"The Lord of truth and mercy, who hears us now, knows that if I had the influence you impute to me, I would gladly save your son. But, alas! I have not the power. Only one thing in this affair influences Mr. Hunter—a sense of justice!"

"A sense of justice! then he believes William guilty!"

"Alas, I fear so!"

"And *you* believe it?"

"I do not know the circumstances."

"Oh," said the mother, speaking rapidly, "*these* were the circumstances—strong enough against him, poor fellow! The murdered man, Burke, was a shop-keeper at St. Inez, in our county. He insulted Nelly more than once, when opportunity offered. At last she complained to William. William is very rash and hot-headed; he challenged Burke. Burke refused to meet him. William then swore that he would thresh the vil-

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lain, and if he resisted, shoot him. He left the house for the purpose. And the same night Burke was found shot through the head, and William, on his return home, was arrested. You know the rest!"

"A fearful chain of evidence, indeed! What could your son say in defence?"

"*The truth*—that he went in search of Burke for the purpose of inflicting summary chastisement upon him, but that he never found him."

"A weak defence, alas!" said Augusta.

"A weak defence, lady, and yet those who know him best, believe him innocent, and his father confessor *knows* that he is so."

Here the deep, smothered sobs and groans of Ellen were heard in the pause, and Mrs. Hunter turned her eyes, full of pity, upon the collapsed form of the young woman. Norah followed her glance.

"Yes," said Norah, "it goes hard with her—if he dies, it may kill her, for she is weak; but even then, lady, her sufferings will not be so great as those *I feel*, who am too strong to die, but not to madden! Oh lady, you think you love your infant now, and doubtless you do so; but not a thousandth-part as you will love her hereafter—especially if it should turn out that she is your *only one!* Ah! few can tell how a parent loves an *only child*, when the affection that should be divided among many is concentrated upon one! Once that poor boy, who is perhaps to die a felon's shameful death to-morrow, was an infant beautiful and innocent as your own! Oh, more beautiful and innocent, as it seemed to me, than any creature out of Heaven! And I loved him so! Oh, I loved him so! I would not let the very slightest pain approach him, if I could keep it off by any sacrifice. I prayed that I might never have any other children to divide my love with him! I wanted to give it *all* to him! I did give it *all* to him. I withdrew all my love from every other human creature, and gathered it into one stream, and poured it, lavished it upon him. All other interests—my God! all other *rights* yielded to his slightest wants!"



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"That was idolatry, and God punishes idolatry," said Augusta, mournfully.

"And who are *you* that reproach me with idolatry? You idolize your own child, and you know it."

"Heaven cure me of the fault if I do! for it is a fearful one!"

"Yes, lady, it *is* a fearful thing to embark all one's hopes and affections on one frail human being!—with but one mortal life! Oh, *I* know it! *I*, who watched the frail life of my child through all the illnesses children are heirs to! And God knows with what protracted agony I watched by the bedside of my one poor child! And the joy I felt when the grasp of death was released, and he recovered! Oh, lady! *once* he was iller—nearer to death than ever—he was given up by his physicians—he had received extreme unction from the priest for death,—the women waited in the room below to lay him out for burial. He was abandoned to the power of death, by all but *me*, his mother! I could not give him up—no, not to Heaven! I wept and wrestled in prayer for his life through all that live-long night! I prayed his life unconditionally—come what might to either of us through the granting of that prayer—I prayed it in Christ's all-potent name! And, madam, he lived! he lived! That night he awoke from his stupor, and called me, 'Mother!' Mrs. Hunter, I nearly swooned with joy! The people who had come to lay him out went home—the priest who had anointed him for death returned thanks for his life! He lived! but lived to meet a fate like this! Lived to be doomed to a felon's death! Would God I had let him die! Would God I had let him die!" exclaimed the poor mother, wringing her hands.

"Oh, Heaven! it is a fearful thing to pray back the life of a dying child, without the adding the clause of the Saviour's prayer,—'Nevertheless, not *my* will but Thine, oh, God, be done!' It is a dread responsibility to pray back to mortal life and mortal trial, the innocence that God would make immortal!" said Augusta, pale with feeling.

"Aye, you can lecture me! *You* are happy! *Your* child is

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a blessed infant yet! It lies there in its crib, sleeping softly, sweetly—it is surrounded with defences! it is all protected!—the south breeze may not blow upon its brow too freshly!—nor the sun kiss its cheek too warmly!—your child sleeps safe in the nest of your love! *Mine* lies in the condemned cell, to be led out to-morrow, amidst a gazing mob, to die a shameful death upon the scaffold!—unless you save him!"

"Oh, would to Heaven I had the power!"

"You have! you have the power! Everybody says so! You have not the *will*. You are happy and selfish—prosperous and pitiless!"

"Alas! I would give everything I possess on earth, except my husband and child, to save your son—God knoweth that I would!"

"Words! words! You do not even promise to make an effort to save him! You do not promise to speak a word in his favor! You will not open your lips to save him! You will not lift your hand to save him! 'Give everything you possess!' You would not give so much as the smallest gem of your tiara to save my only child from an unmerited death, and me from madness!"

Augusta gave not a word or look in refutation of this charge. The pity of her soul was strong, for she feared, by the wildness of the woman's eyes, and the frequent incoherence of her talk, that dread sorrow and suspense were doing their worst work upon her mind, and unsettling her reason.

It was a relief that, just at this moment Daniel Hunter entered the room. He came in by the private door communicating with his own apartments. He did not at once perceive the presence of strangers in the room, for without once raising his eyes, he stepped immediately up to the crib which stood at the end of the room, and in which his treasure and his heart lay. Norah O'Leary saw him when he entered, and recognized him instinctively; she watched him when he stepped up to the side of that crib, and drew the curtains; she continued to watch him as he gazed upon the little sleeper with a softening countenance. It was, indeed, strange to see that whilome grim,

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severe politician and statesman—that firm, stern, immutable ruler, gazing with so soft a smile upon the sleeping child! And the wretched Norah watched to draw a hopeful augury from that tender mood! Drawing the curtains gently together Daniel Hunter left the crib, and came forward towards his wife. Then seeing, for the first time, her two visitors, whom he evidently considered to be women of humble life—probably seamstresses in distress, or something of the kind; he merely nodded a kindly acknowledgment of their presence, and then standing by his wife, entered into conversation with her.

It was only for a moment that he stood speaking with Augusta, yet in that moment, while they stood together, Norah O'Leary read the characters of both more accurately than ever she could have read either apart; and she was forcibly struck with a general but undefinable resemblance between them in air, manner, and expression—such a resemblance as might be imagined to exist between two persons who had grown up together, and gradually merged into one in heart, mind, and purpose.

His countenance was the countenance of one who had suffered, struggled and overcome. His expression was firm, serious, and elevated. Hers seemed the bright and soft reflection of his own. Her eyes turned towards him with a calm, confident, elevated, and elevating love and adoration, just quickened with a thought of dread, not degrading, but exalting the affection, as though the idea of displeasing him, or falling short of his standard of excellence would have seemed to her a serious misfortune. Her face, too, in its grave, majestic beauty, spoke of struggle and of conquest—of struggle, not with the world, but with herself—of conquest, not of destiny, but of her own spirit; for she had grave faults of character, hereditary faults of her house and rank—great pride and high temper—and from her childhood these had been subjected to the severest discipline, and no cloistered nun, in her religious enthusiasm, ever more wrestled with her own nature to make herself an acceptable bride of heaven, than did this beautiful woman of society, to render herself worthy of the love and esteem of her husband. Only for an instant, as

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I said, they conversed together, and then the earnest, eloquent eyes of Augusta turned from the face of her husband, and fixed themselves upon the woman standing near. He understood and followed her glance, and instantly his quick perceptive faculties received the truth, and thinking within himself,

"This is another trial, and the most serious one yet," he inquired, in a kind tone, "Well, my good woman, what is it?"

"Oh, sir!" exclaimed Norah O'Leary, sinking at his feet, and raising her clasped hands and strained gaze to his face. "Oh, sir! I implore you to hear and grant my prayer? I am a poor, old, heart-broken mother, come to beg for the life of my only child. Sir, I have been told that you have rejected every petition for his pardon. I hear that you have turned away from the pleadings of the very greatest men in the State? Yet you will not turn away from mine? You will not see a gray-haired woman at your feet praying you to spare the life of her only son, and spurn her away to madness? Oh! no, you will think of your own mother, and pity the widow's gray hairs and broken heart?" She paused, but still held up her clasped hands, and raised her strained gaze to his face in silent supplication.

Daniel Hunter kept sternly down the rising pity of his heart; but his manner was compassionate and reverential, as he stooped and gave her his hand to assist her to her feet, and said,

"Rise, madam, I beg of you."

"You pardon my son?" she asked, with a wild, appealing gaze, as she grasped his hands, but remained on her knees.

"Madam," said Daniel Hunter, in a grave, sorrowful voice, "I feel at this moment a pain only second to your own—"

"Oh, do not utter what you were about to say! You, and you only, can save my child! You have so much power. Oh, my God! that any human being should have power over my one child's life to take it away at his pleasure! Oh, sir, have mercy! Have mercy, as you expect mercy of heaven! Oh, grant me my child's life, for you can do it! You can do it, by only writing your name. Good Heaven, when I think of the terrible power that resides in this hand! this hand of yours!



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You have but to take a pen in it and make your autograph, and my son is free to live and be happy. Do it, sir. Do it—oh! Where is there a paper and ink? Lady, wont you send for it?" And so wildly, incoherently she pleaded, as they plead who sue for life.

Augusta looked on in the deepest distress, and turned her eyes occasionally towards the distant form of Nelly, who was weeping silently.

Daniel Hunter saw the distress of his wife, and stepping to her side for an instant, said, in a low voice,

"Retire, my dearest love, your presence here can do no sort of good, and this interview grows too painful for you."

But Augusta mournfully shook her head, saying, in a whisper, "I will not leave them if you please, Mr. Hunter?"

Daniel Hunter did not insist, but came back to where Norah O'Leary still knelt, and once more attempted to raise her, saying,

"Rise, Mrs. O'Leary! For your own sake, rise."

"Never! while my boy lies condemned to die," said Norah, wildly.

"This is most distressing to us all, besides being perfectly unavailing—"

"Oh, sir, do not say that!" exclaimed Norah, interrupting him suddenly, "do not, sir! oh, sir, I implore you by the love you bear your beautiful wife, to bear with me farther. You would not suffer *her* to be pained even by the sight of another's woe; oh, sir, by that tender care of *her*, I entreat you to pity *me!* Sir, this broken, gray-haired woman at your feet, was not many years ago a wife beloved and cherished; but he who cared for her lies in his grave; and now the heaviest storms of sorrow beat upon her bare head, and there is none to pity and to save!"

"There is one—the God of the widow and the fatherless. Pray to him! His pity is never invoked in vain. His power is never limited," said Daniel Hunter, solemnly.

"Be *his* instrument! Be his instrument! Stretch forth your hand and save! Oh! sir, by your happiness and my

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misery—by your power and my helplessness—by our common human nature, and by our common dependence on God's mercy, I implore, I adjure you to be Heaven's instrument of salvation to me!"

"I would to God I *were* the chosen instrument. I am not."

"Still callous; oh, God! what will move you? Oh! sir, listen to me farther. Governor Daniel Hunter, I saw and studied your excellency when you were nothing but a common man, with a father's ordinary love and weakness. I saw you when you entered this room, go first and bend with looks of infinite, of unutterable love, over the cradle of your child! Daniel Hunter!—not the Governor, but the father—I implore you by the love you bear your child, to pity the mother's heart within me, and spare mine! Sir, this broken-hearted wretch at your feet was once a happy wife and mother. She had an only child, as beautiful, as innocent, and as beloved as yours! Sir, that child is now a miserable man, doomed—doomed; oh! God, you know his fate! I cannot, cannot speak it!"

Here she sank down lower upon the floor, covered her face with her hands, and struggled to repress the suffocating sobs and groans that stifled her voice.

Daniel Hunter was deeply moved; with all his self-control, his countenance still betrayed the greatest mental pain. At length she spoke again.

"My child is doomed to die a murderer's horrid death—my child who is even now as innocent, and God pity him, as simple and as harmless as the babe in yonder cradle! Oh, Daniel Hunter, by the love you *lavish* on your child, pity a wretched mother's heart. My love is as great, my hopes were once as confident for him who lies in yonder cell, as yours are for the child that sleeps in peace in yonder crib! Oh, Daniel Hunter! by all the fond, high hopes embarked in that babe's life and future fortunes—hear and grant my prayer, and spare my child." And in the abjectness of her grief and supplication, she cowered and grovelled at his feet, and then lifted her clasped hands and strained eyes in the very agony of supplication.

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Daniel Hunter ground his teeth together. Augusta turned deadly pale, and reeled, and caught to the dressing-table for support. A conflict of many emotions was overpowering her strength. It was not only an agonizing sympathy with the suffering mother, but it was a vague unreasoning *fear* of her. Every time, when in the course of this interview, the dark, desperate looking woman had in any way alluded to her sleeping babe, Augusta had trembled through all her frame.

Daniel Hunter, seeing her great disturbance, without divining the whole of its cause, stepped up to her, and said,

Augusta, you should have retired when I recommended you to do so. This scene is too much for you. Go, at once."

"You are right," said Augusta, in a faltering voice. "I will go."

But instead of leaving the room by the door leading through the ball to the drawing-rooms, Augusta went up to the crib, raised the child in her arms, and passed into the adjoining bedchamber. An undefined, instinctive dread of some unknown danger to the babe—a dread that she could neither understand nor resist—took possession of her soul, and governed her actions.

Daniel Hunter watched her without participating in her imaginary fears, or understanding the cause of her movement. And when the door had closed behind her, he turned again to the suppliant at his feet, and once more attempting to raise her, said,

"Mrs. O'Leary, Heaven bears me witness, how deeply I sympathize with your sufferings—how terrible to me it is to be obliged to refuse your request. But you entirely mistake my power. *I* am under the law of conscience, and accountable to Heaven for the use I make of the power vested in my person! I could not tell you, perhaps, without deeply wounding your heart, how much reason I have for refusing to grant your petition. I can only recommend you and yours to the tender mercy of God, whose compassion and whose power are both unlimited!"

"HUSH! HUSH!" exclaimed Norah, with a frenzied gesture

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"Do not drive me mad! Remember your mother, and do not drive a gray-haired woman mad with grief! Oh! for your own old mother's sake, hear and grant my prayer."

She was wringing her hands in the wildest anguish of supplication.

Daniel Hunter's face was pale and stern. He felt the necessity of bringing this scene to an instantaneous end. He said,

"Mrs. O'Leary, I have not the power to save your son, without a sacrifice of principle, and that I will not make."

"You would make it for one of your own! You would make it for one of your own!" she cried, in a passion of grief.

"No. Understand me, poor woman! I have said upon a former occasion, and I repeat—if it were my brother in your son's place, and if my aged mother were here at my feet, praying for her child's life as you pray, I should act as I do now. I should refuse her prayer as I refuse yours!"

"You would not! Tiger-heart as you are, you would not!"

"I would, so help me, Heaven!"

"If he were your 'brother,' aye! *but if he were your son?*"

"He should die!"

"And you will not—oh, my God! you will not save my son?"

"I cannot!"

With a terrific shriek, the wretched woman threw up her arms, and fell prone to the floor.

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An hour after that three foot-passengers, weary in frame and crushed in heart, took their mournful way towards the prison. They were—Norah O'Leary, whose wild, bewildered air and tottering steps required constant watchfulness and support from her companions—Nelly O'Leary, who still continued to weep and wail, more like a grieved child than a despairing wife—and Father Goodrich, whose sorrowful task it was to convey to the prisoner the decision of the Governor, and, in the few hours left him on earth, to assist him in seeking that mercy from God which he had failed of obtaining from man. They pursued their way

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in utter silence, except for the low wailing of Nelly, and an occasional terrific groan, that *rived* its way up through the tortured heart of Norah.

The streets had been very dark, for the moon had not yet risen; but suddenly, as by a given signal, every window glared with light. It was the illumination in honor of the Governor. And every house, every street, the whole city was in an absolute *blaze* of splendor! And at the signal, as it were, every house emptied itself of its excited inmates, and speedily the streets were filled with crowds as numerous, as gaily dressed, as joyous and as noisy as those of the day.

Our sorrowful pilgrims made their way as well as they could through the merry jostling multitudes.

In crossing on the flag-stones, they had to stop suddenly, to avoid being run over by a splendid open barouche that whirled past them full of ladies and gentlemen.

"It is the Governor's carriage—they are going to the inaugural ball," said the old priest, with a deep sigh; "I know not what evil spirit spoke by the lips of the good old Father. He soon felt that it was a hapless speech, and he looked at Norah. And her face, upturned in the red glare, was the face of a demon! "Do not look after them, daughter—do not think of them," he began, soothingly.

Her teeth snapped, and she drew in her breath with a hissing sound.

"Think rather of the Saviour's suffering. I often feel that for some trials of our mortal life, there is no lesson in all the Scriptures like that contained in the history of the Saviour's trial and crucifixion—his sweet submission to his Father's will—that even the agony and bloody sweat exclaimed, 'Not my will, but thine, oh God, be done,—his lovely meekness when he opened not his mouth in reproach to his accusers—his adorable patience under the scorn, the scourge and the crown of thorns, and above all, his divine charity, when in the last anguish of his death-throes he cried—'Father forgive them, for they know not what they do!' Oh, my daughter, can *we* cherish resent-

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ment, even if it be just, which is often very doubtful when he, the Divine, the sinless One, in the very agonies of death, forgave his murderers, and prayed for mercy for them?"

In discourse such as this, and oblivious of the glaring light and noisy crowd, they made their way to the prison. And Norah answered never a word, only by those dreadful groans, that seemed to rend their course up through her bursting heart.

At length they reached the jail. The warden was anxiously awaiting them, and came forward to meet them, asking, breathlessly,

"What hope?"

"None, but in Heaven," answered the priest. Then, in his turn, he inquired, "How is your prisoner?"

"Full of confidence, poor boy! waiting impatiently for his reprieve!"

"Heaven support him in the terrible disappointment. Mr. Thomas, let me immediately into his cell. I am charged by the Governor to inform him of his approaching death!"

"A very sorrowful duty, sir, and I am truly grieved that you should have the pain of performing it. Do these women accompany you to the cell?" inquired the warden, in a subdued tone, pointing to where Norah O'Leary stood propped against the wall, with her arms and head hanging down, in the very desolation of misery—and Nelly sat upon the ground, sobbing like a heart-broken child.

"No, I think not," answered the priest, in a low whisper. "I think it best that I should break the matter to the poor lad alone. Then, when that is done, and I have had an opportunity of talking to him, and, it may be, calming and preparing him a little, I will send for them."

The warden produced the keys, and the priest went to Norah, and taking her arm, said,

"Mrs. O'Leary, I wish you to go in Mr. Thomas's room and wait there till I send for you. I am going to your son's cell."

Norah lifted her inflamed and straining eyes in an appealing gaze to his face.

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But he replied to that silent pleading, by saying,

"Mrs. O'Leary, it would greatly impede all the good I might do your son, and very much distress him, besides, were you to accompany me now to his presence. Take your daughter into the warden's room, and wait there till I send for you."

With one of those dreadful groans which, once heard, might never be forgotten, Norah turned to obey.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE NIGHT BEFORE THE EXECUTION.

Pain with its keen and poisoned fang,
The horror of the mortal pang,
The suffering look his brow had worn,
The fear, the strife, the anguish gone,
He sleeps at last in peace.—*Whittier.*

On their way to the cell, the priest requested of the warden to be left alone with the doomed prisoner for half-an hour. And Mr. Thomas consented, well pleased to be relieved of the necessity of attending Father Goodrich to the presence of O'Leary, and witnessing the painful disclosure. Therefore, on arriving at the cell, the warden unlocked the door, admitted the priest, closed it, and turned the key. When Father Goodrich entered the cell, which was lighted by a night-lamp, he saw the prisoner lying on the outside of the bed, without his coat, apparently in a light slumber. The priest had scarcely time to notice the pale, emaciated countenance of the sleeper, always paler and more emaciated in repose, or when not lighted up by the sweet and joyous spirit, before William sprang up, and with a smile beaming with pleasure exclaimed,

"Oh! is it you, Father Goodrich? I *thought* you'd come; and I might have *known* you would, if it were ever so late! Thank you! thank you a thousand times! You have saved me from some hours of tedious waiting."

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And without seeing the portentous solemnity of the Father's countenance, O'Leary darted to his coat, and began hastily to draw it on, cracking the arm-holes in his haste and impatience, and scarcely staying to fasten a button, he began to look around for his hat, and seized it, where it lay fallen under the table, exclaiming,

"I wonder, Father, if there is any chance of picking up a hack outside, for in my present weak state, it would take me all night to reach the distant quarter of the city where my family lodge."

"William!" said the priest, mournfully, "you think I have got the reprieve!"

"Why, certainly! or the Marshal has. Where is he?" said O'Leary, going to the table-drawer, and gathering up his little effects and cramming them into his pockets, far too prepossessed with his own idea of pardon, life and liberty, to receive a single suspicion of the truth from the priest's sorrowful tone and manner.

"William," said the Father, "neither I nor the Marshal have the reprieve!"

"Now, you don't mean to say," exclaimed O'Leary, throwing himself down into the chair with a look of disappointment and exhaustion, that they intend to keep me here *all night?*"

"Yes, William!"

"Now, that is really too bad! It is ungenerous to defer a grace to the very last moment—or *not* a *grace*—but an act of justice to an innocent man; for it seems to me, Father, that they must consider this reprieve an act of justice; for I do not know how any one can look in the face of an innocent man and believe him guilty; it seems to me *truth* ought to be so self-evident."

"It is not—it has never been—oh! would to Heaven it were!"

"I would so, too; but, Father! about this tiresome reprieve! Will it be here early in the morning?"

"No, William."

"Good Heaven, Father! It cannot be! no, it cannot be! They cannot be so cruel as to defer the reprieve to the *very last moment!*" exclaimed the young man, shuddering.

"No, William," said the priest, as if he would not vary from those two mechanical words.



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Then O'Leary's face grew ashy pale, his eyes assumed a wild expression, tottering to the side of Father Goodrich, he caught his hand, and gazed in speechless agony in his face, faltering out, in a dying voice—

"What do you mean?"

"Heaven pity you, William, there is *no* reprieve, nor will there be one!"

He reeled back to his chair, and fell into it, groaning,

"*Oh, Nelly! Oh, mother!*"

And no word was spoken between them for several minutes. At last he spoke,

"Do *they* know it?"

"Yes, they know it."

"And—they—how do they—how?"

"You mean how do they bear it? Nelly, you know, is 'meek and lowly in heart;' she weeps, but does not rebel—and the Lord will wipe all tears from *her* eyes—be comforted for Nelly, my poor son; all will be well with *her*. Think of your own soul's welfare."

"But, mother! *oh! mother!*"

"We must pray for her. I must take charge of her. Leave her to God. Leave all earthly affections and cares to God. Think only now of your salvation—think only now of Heaven, my son!"

With a sudden burst of uncontrollable emotion, the unhappy young man exclaimed,

"Oh! it was cruel! it was cruel! It was most atrocious! It was damnable to deceive me in this way! To let me go on to the last, expecting to live! preparing to live; and then to hurl down this sudden death upon me—to whirl me into eternity without a moment for preparation—without a moment for self-recollection! It is killing body and soul together! And they have no right to do that, if I were guilty!"

"My poor, unhappy son, whom do you reproach? Whom do you call *they?*"

"The people who deceived me to my perdition with the hope of life; the Governor, who will not reprieve."

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"The people deceived themselves through their benevolence, as you, my unhappy son, deceived *yourself* through your hopes. Forget human weakness and human error—all except your own—and turn with me to Heaven—"

"Oh! but I am *guiltless!* Must I die a *guiltless* death?

"Would it be easier to die a *guilty* one?—as you might have died? As any of us might die, for all are subject to sudden temptations! Do not think only of the wrongs you have *suffered*, or are *about* to suffer; think only of the wrongs you have *done*—to your *own soul*—to your *Maker*. Think of that most Holy One, by whose *guiltless*—"

"Oh, God! Father! how can I think of anything else when my heart is swelling—is bursting with its sense of this horrible injustice?"

"Do not let your anger burn against any fellow sinner. The Divine Saviour, amidst the agonies of crucifixion, forgave his murderers, and prayed for their pardon—saying, 'Father, forgive them, for *they know not what they do?*" He, the sinless Son of God, in the supreme hour of his anguish forgave his tormentors; can you not also forgive your mistaken judges; they also *know not what they do.* Let me read to you the last scene in the life of Christ. It is just what you want now," said the priest, and he went to the table and took up the Bible, and brought it, and sat down on the bed near O'Leary, and turned to the 26th chapter of Matthew, and beginning at the 36th verse, read the deeply affecting account of Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and his arrest, and trial, and crucifixion; he read slowly, pausing and commenting upon those divine passages that so melt the heart and awe the soul. Sensitive and penetrable as the most tender woman, William O'Leary listened with breathless attention, and at the last words—when Father Goodrich looked upon his face, the young man's eyes were full of tears. The father closed the book, and putting his arm around William's shoulders, motioned him silently to his knees, and he poured forth his soul in prayer for that Divine mercy for the prisoner which is never asked in vain. When they arose from

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their knees, William was composed and fortified, and the priest went to the door and gave the signal for it to be unlocked.

More than a half hour—more than an hour had passed in reading, prayer, and spiritual counsel; and when the door was unfastened, it was not by the warden, who had left the lobby, but by a turnkey, whom he had stationed there in his stead.

When the door was opened, and a rush of air came into the cell, the priest stepped back to the cot where William O'Leary had thrown himself, and he said, in a low voice,

"I am going now to bring your mother and wife to see you. They are waiting in Mr. Thomas's room. I know that you will command yourself, William. If you feel your fortitude failing, lift your heart to Heaven for strength, my son."

"Do not fear—I will be firm, by the help of Heaven."

Father Goodrich pressed his hand and left the cell. When the priest reached the warden's room, he found Norah standing midway the floor, with an eager, almost frenzied look from her eyes. Nelly sat at a table with her arms thrown over it at full length, and her head bowed upon them.

"You have told him, Father?" asked Norah, in a hollow voice.

"Yes, my daughter, and he bears it with the resignation of a Christian. Imitate his pious fortitude, my dear daughter, rather than disturb it by giving way to your feelings. He is ready to see you," said the good priest, and going to Nelly, he touched her on the shoulder, saying, "Come, my child! come, my poor girl! let me go with you to William's cell."

Nelly lifted up her head and wiped the tears from her wasted cheeks, and joined her mother; and they followed Father Goodrich out. He conducted them to the cell, and they were admitted for an hour, at the end of which time the warden had informed them that the prison would be closed for the night. When they entered the cell, they found O'Leary on his knees by the side of the cot. He remained in that posture a few minutes, as if to finish his prayer, and then arose. But Nelly overset the composure of the whole party, by throwing herself

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upon William's bosom, and giving way to a passionate burst of grief. Norah stood leaning against the wall for support, and her bloodless cheeks and strained, yet sunken eye, and ghastly countenance, spoke of a despair so deep and utter, that the passionate sorrow of Nelly seemed but a childish grief beside it. O'Leary gave all his attention to the task of soothing and comforting his young wife. But every word he spoke, and every caress he gave her, seemed only to open a fresh fountain of tears and sobs. At last,

"Speak to her, mother," he said, "do speak to her, and try to quiet her."

Norah came to her side and took her away, and when she had set her down in the chair at the other end of the cell, she said, in a deep, hoarse voice,

"Nelly! *hush!* If you loved him truly, you would not distress him so! Keep back your tears, woman! There will be leisure enough to shed them afterwards, when they can hurt nobody."

With a few convulsive, suffocating sobs, poor Nelly swallowed her tears, and assumed an unreal composure.

"Father?" inquired Norah of the priest, "is this understood to be our last visit—our farewell?"

"I do not know; my poor child, it will depend upon William himself, I suppose. But I should advise that it should be. I would have the remaining hours of the boy undisturbed by thoughts of earth, pure even as family affection is. I will speak to him. And the Father went to the cot where O'Leary sat exhausted, after his efforts to console Nelly. "William," he said, "would you like that this should be your parting interview with your family, or would you prefer to see them again in the morning?"

"Oh, no, Father, oh, no! It is too painful for them—they suffer too dreadfully. No, Father, let the bitterness of death be passed to-night, and let the remaining hours be given to Heaven."

"You are right, my son, perfectly right, and may these last



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remaining hours be blessed to your soul's highest good!" said the priest, and then he went to Norah and said, "Mrs. O'Leary, it is as I expected. Your son wishes that this should be the final interview—but why not speak to him yourself, my dear child?"

"I cannot! I cannot!—then *this* is the parting?"

"Yes."

"Nelly!" she said, stooping to speak to her daughter in a low voice, "if you really do love your husband, prove it now, by your self-control! Go to him and receive his last directions, for in something less than an hour we must leave him, and we shall not see him again in life."

Gasping and sobbing, and gulping her tears, Nelly went to the cot and sat down by William, and dropped her head upon his shoulder, saying,

"Oh! Willie! tell me if there is anything in the world you would have me to do, and I will do it! Oh! Willie! it will be the only comfort I shall have left in the world when you are gone?" And here a fresh burst of tears threatened to overtake her, but she struggled and gasped, and repressed them. "Tell me, Willie, tell me what I can do for you, and if mortal woman can do it, I will, be it what it may?"

"I know you will, Nelly! Well, dearest, in the first place, promise me never to bear malice against any one for my death. Will you promise this? Remember, it is my dying request?"

"Oh, Willie! that is very hard, very hard to do! But I will promise you to pray daily for grace to forgive your destroyers, Willie."

"And secondly, bring up our children in the knowledge and the fear of the Lord?

"I will do that to the best of my ability, Willie, if I live. But, oh! I shall die! But for the children I wish I might!"

"You will not die, dearest, you will live for your children, and every year you will grow stronger and firmer, and better able to guard and guide them. Now, you are youthful, and tender, and sensitive, and grief penetrates you through and through, but

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after a while you will have more fortitude and resistance. God will give it you. God will support and strengthen you. You will have the double charge of infancy and age—for I do not think my mother will ever recover from this blow—see! she has grown aged since this morning! I leave her, as I leave our children, in your care! Poor Nelly! young and weak, and friendless as you are, you will have to take your stand among the workers and sufferers in the exposed outer circle of life—sheltering with your own feeble form the feebler frames of infancy and of age—receiving upon your own shoulders the storms and buffets of life, that they, whom you shield, may be safe and warm—taking upon your own soul the heavy cares of life, that they whom you think for may be free of care! And who shall care for you? And who shall help and shelter you when the burden grows too heavy for your strength, and the storms beat too fiercely upon you? There is One who cares for you as you care for others. One who will shelter you under the shadow of his wing, even as you shelter others. One who invites you to cast all your cares on him. He is the God of the fatherless and of the widow, without whom not a sparrow falleth to the ground, much less one of you. And there is no limit to his love or to his power. And in your times of trial, when you are like to faint under the heat and burden of the day, 'cast all your cares on him, for he careth for you.' When you are weary and heavy-laden go to him, and he shall give you rest. And, remember this, dear Nelly, when you are tempted to murmur at your fate, and to long for the peaceful, sheltered lot of woman—remember that the post of danger, of difficulty, of toil and privation, is also the post of HONOR, and think, for you may think it without irreverence, that Providence, like a wise general, chooses his best and most valued soldiers for the posts of difficulty and danger, that he sympathizes with you—watches over you—is ever ready to come to your aid, that 'as your day so your strength shall be,' that you shall not be tried 'more than you are able.' You are small and weak, I know, poor little Nelly, but your Father is Almighty, and it is out of just such

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fragile frames that the greatest heroines, saints and martyrs have been made! Our extremity is God's opportunity! And in our weakness is his strength made manifest. Dear Nelly, you do not attend to me?"

"*Oh! I do! I do!*" she said, lifting her pale face from his shoulder.

"And you will try to remember it?"

"Oh, yes! I will! I will!"

"May God help you to do so, my dearest Nelly! And now, love, we must all kneel together for the last time on earth, and ask God for comfort and support, in this, our parting hour. And then, dearest Nelly, you must go home, and take care of our child, and leave me here with Father Goodrich. He has promised to remain with me to the last, Nelly." And he gently unclasped her arms from around his neck, and sat her down and beckoned the priest.

Father Goodrich came, and they all knelt and prayed together —*except Norah*—she, too—not to disturb them, knelt, but did not pray. And it was well they could not see her face, so full of anguish and rebellion. At last they arose, strengthened and comforted—*except Norah!*—who would not ask comfort, who would have hurled it back in the face of angels, had it been offered.

A few minutes after this, the turnkey's tap at the door warned them that the final moment of separation had come. The priest went, and spoke a few moments with that officer, then came and told O'Leary to get the parting over as soon as possible—the sooner it was done, the less painful it would be, he said. William got up and approached Nelly.

"Come, dearest," he said, "you must say good-bye, and leave me now," and he drew her to his bosom, in a last embrace.

She threw her arms around his neck, clasping him convulsively, and dropped her face upon his shoulder, to try to smother the bursting sob.

"God bless you, Nelly! God in heaven bless you and sustain you, my dearest wife," he said, and pressed her closer to his

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heart, but her form felt heavier in his arms, and was slipping from them before he perceived that she had fainted, and, "It is better even so," he said, and laid her in the arms of Father Goodrich, who, deeply affected, bore her from the cell.

O'Leary went to his mother, and kneeling upon one knee, said,

"Now dearest and best mother, bless me, and embrace me, and leave me to Heaven."

"And do you think that I will leave you, then?" asked Norah. "Do you think that I will leave you while a pulse beats in your heart? No, William, no!"

"Dearest mother, do not talk so, you must go, alas!"

"And do you think that since they will kill you, my boy, that any power, on earth, shall tear me from you? No! no!" she exclaimed, wildly, "I will stay with you while you live, and die with you when you die! Oh! it will be better for those left alive if I do!"

William O'Leary looked at her in the deepest trouble. It was evident from the fitful flashing and flaming of the fierce, blood-shotten eyes, and the spasmodic snapping of the grim and haggard jaws, that the fires of frenzy were kindling in her veins! It was not in his gentle nature to cope with an opponent like that. He waited anxiously for the return of the priest, who was not absent long. First,

"Where have you left my wife, Father?" he asked.

"In the warden's parlor, in charge of his kind niece. Nelly is recovering from her swoon, and I will take her home safely myself."

"Thank you, sir! Heaven reward and bless you. And now can you persuade my mother to leave me?"

No, he could not. He went to Norah; but no arguments nor persuasion had the least power to move her one inch from her purpose.

"I must see the warden," said the priest, and going to the door, he sent the turnkey to bring that official.

The warden came.

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The priest explained the difficulty. And after considerable delay and consultation, it was agreed that Norah should be locked in for the night with the prisoner, and that the priest should carry the poor young wife to her lodgings.

It was a very trying thing to give the poor young man an impious woman, instead of a holy priest, for the companion of his last night. It was dreadful so to harass the last hours of a poor soul trying to compose and prepare itself for death. But Norah O'Leary was insane, and for a little resistance, this insanity would have burst into open madness! No one could see her, and doubt it for a moment! And to arouse such a frenzy in the presence of her son, by any attempt to remove her, would have been the last degree of cruelty to the unhappy young man, Finally, the warden and the priest took leave of the prisoner for the night; the latter promising to take every care of Nelly, and to return to the cell by daybreak the next morning. And Norah, with a powerful turnkey as a guard upon her, was locked in with her son.

The priest procured a hack, and took poor Nelly to the humble lodgings where she had left her child, and gave her into the charge of the landlady, urging her to pay her guest the most careful attention, and promising to be responsible for the payment of all expenses.

Meanwhile the night in the condemned cell passed heavily. The great turnkey sat slumbering on his gloomy watch in a corner. Norah sat apart, with her hands clasped upon her knees, and her fierce eyes fixed upon vacancy. William O'Leary sat at the stand, with a book of devotion open before him. But ever and anon his eyes wandered uneasily from the page to the face of his mother, and more than once he arose and went to her, begging her to come and sit by him, and to let him read to her the blessed words that comforted his own soul. But she always refused, telling him to read if it could console him, that *she* was beyond consolation. To seek Heaven, if he liked it, that *she* and Heaven were at war forever—and other mad mocking words like these. About midnight, he left his table, and came to her, and said,

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"Mother, I am not unhappy. I am calm and resigned to the will of my Maker. Mother, I wish to sleep. I will lie down if you will also rest."

Then she spoke.

"Lie down, William. Sleep; I will sit by you and watch. And if I get sleepy, I also will lie down."

He threw off his coat and cast himself upon the bed, and was soon in a deep sleep. She sat watching him as she had promised. He slept more than an hour, she still watching him. At last he moved and smiled in his sleep. Then he spoke, babbling of home, and children, and rural life. She stooped down to listen. He was evidently in a deep dream, and *realizing* in his dream the *journey home*—the long anticipated, earnestly desired *journey home*. He talked about the crystal spring, and the shady elm, and the silvery pebbles in the branch.

"He is happy! He is free! He lives! Why should he ever wake to captivity and shame and death? Oh, if *now* his soul could take its flight to Heaven! For *he* is prepared for Heaven! Oh, if *now* his pure and happy spirit could be set free to fly to Heaven! What a painless, blissful death were that! Why should I not set him free? I, who gave him life! I, who love him! Ah, but they would call it murder! Yes, but the execution to-morrow will be a more cruel murder! Yes, but if I do it they will hang me. Well, *let them*—they might hang me *now*, in his place, if they would let him live! *I will do it!* Ah, but if I do I shall go to hell! Yes, but I am not sure of that! I do but set his spirit free to save it from the agonies of death! *I will do it! I will do it!*"

And all this time the maniac was nervously fumbling in her bosom, and drew out a dagger. Her face was deadly white, and fearful to look upon; her eyes glared upon the sleeper till that gaze of insane but deathless love looked like hatred.

"One quick, strong, sure blow, and he is free! It must be quick, strong, and *sure*, in order to be painless. *Why do I hesitate?* I am weak and cowardly to let him wake to suffering. I know that he is prepared for Heaven! I know that this one

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blow will send him there without suffering, and I know that if I do not strike this blow, he will wake to agony, shame, and death, as certain. *Why do I pause?* I would give my life to save him from this suffering! I would give my *soul* to save him! *Why do I pause?* I will do it! I WILL do it But there must be but *one* blow! I can strike but once, and that must go *home—home!*"

And still grasping the dagger with her right hand, she ran her left hand softly into his bosom, and felt lightly about until she felt his heart beating under her fingers. She drew her breath quick and hard, like a panting panther; keeping her fingers upon the beating heart, she raised the dagger, but let it fall again, and cast herself upon the floor.

"I cannot, *cannot* slay my sleeping child! No, not to save him from the agony and the shame!"

The noise of her fall and her cry did not awaken the sleeper from his "deep dream of peace"—but it aroused the turnkey, who got up, yawned, stretched his length of limb, and walked up and down the floor, to relieve his stiffened muscles. Then he stooped, and in a hushed voice—being unwilling to awake his charge—begged Mrs. O'Leary to get up and compose herself, and take comfort; but he might as well have reasoned with a wild animal in its lair. And the turnkey abandoned his efforts and resumed his seat. And Norah half-lifted herself from the floor, and dropped her head upon the side of the cot. And the deep sleep and sweet dream of the prisoner remained unbroken until morning. And near the morning was heard the distant, muffled sound of hammers, as if the joiner's dreadful work in the prison yard was done with a reserve. No one heard or understood the import of the sound except the turnkey. The young man in his deep sleep, and the woman in her deep grief, were both unconscious of the slight noise.

A little after daybreak the prisoner awoke, at first naturally and calmly; then, with a sudden, vague sense of some terrible, immediately impending calamity, and then came the swift, sharp pang of memory, and then the struggle for self-collection and composure.

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The good priest was already in the lobby, waiting for his voluntary awakening to be admitted. He now entered the cell with his calm benedicite. Norah lifted her stricken head, and every hair upon it was white as snow! But such things have happened before.

The turnkey was relieved from his guard, for in this supreme hour, only the higher officers of the prison attended the condemned. Next followed the very slight toilet and slighter breakfast.

And then the prisoner was left for a very short time alone with his mother and the priest, and the time was spent in reading, praying, and conversing. Norah, not to vex the poor prisoner and his confessor, joining outwardly in their devotions, but with a bitter, rebellious, despairing soul. At the close of this hour, the condemned entreated her to leave him alone with the priest, and not to refuse his dying prayer, or prevent his dying interview with his spiritual guide. Norah was deaf, or mad, or both. She would not heed his arguments, or leave him. She retired to the extremity of the cell, while he, in a low voice, made his confession, and received absolution, according to his belief. Then she came forward and joined them, or rather seemed to join them, in the solemn and beautiful litany for a departing spirit. She remained with him in the dreadful hour that succeeded, when his cell was filled with officers, with reporters, with clergymen of other denominations, and the miscellaneous crowd that official duty, morbid curiosity, or mistaken kindness, obtrude upon a condemned prisoner in his last hours.

She remained with him through the ghastly toilet of death, and followed closest behind him when they led him forth to die. And the crowd that attended him, the officers, reporters, clergymen, and others, that shuddered *not* to see that pale youth led forth to death, shuddered to see that dark and terrible woman in such a scene, yet dreaded to interfere with her. There was a calm and elevated heroism in William O'Leary's look and step as he mounted the scaffold; it was not the party, or political, or patriotic heroism that has often sustained men in the presence of



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death—it was higher than either of those—it was simple *Christian* heroism—firm and patient acceptance and endurance of the will of Heaven.

Norah attended him to the scaffold, and stood below when he mounted the platform: a wild, frantic hope of a reprieve, a hope of some miracle that should manifest his innocence, or change the immutable determination of the Governor, distracted her to the last. She saw the clergyman and sheriff's officers grouped around him on the platform; she saw the cap drawn over his eyes, the cord adjusted, and still she wildly hoped. She saw the sheriff and the priest shake hands with him, and descend the steps of the platform. She saw him standing alone upon the drop, and still she madly hoped—and while she gazed, the drop fell!——She saw him swinging between heaven and earth, his form convulsed in the agonies of the violent death, and then hope and reason fled for ever! hating the sunlight, cursing the earth, blaspheming heaven, she fled the scene, a maniac and a wanderer over the wide world.

* * * * * *

It was the good priest who took charge of the poor remains of William O'Leary, and saw them decently interred. Nelly, half dead, but resigned, attended the private burial. And the last care of the good Father, after an ineffectual search for Norah, was to convey Nelly back to her distant country home.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE MOUNTAIN FORGE.

Thus at the flaming forge of life
Our fortunes must be wrought;
Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
Each burning deed and thought.—*Longfellow.*

YOUR patience, dear reader, while we cast a brief glance backward upon the past life of the family with whose history I am trying to entertain you. The retrospect seems necessary, to clear up some slight mysteries already alluded to, as well as to throw light upon much to be related. I can only promise that it shall be short, and hope that it may be not uninteresting or uninstructive:

Daniel Hunter, like the majority of our most distinguished men, in every department of fame, sprang, as has been said, from the very humblest of the people. His immediate progenitor was a country blacksmith, in one of the western and mountainous districts of M——, and the father of eleven children, six sons, of whom the future Governor of M—— was the third, and five daughters, of whom the four younger have already been presented to you. It is scarcely necessary, as it would be tedious, to relate in detail the means by which this sturdy mechanic brought up his large family, and succeeded in establishing each of his sons in a lucrative, or honorable situation. It is sufficient to recollect that, in our prosperous country, wherever there is a sound mind in a sound body, industry, energy, self denial and perseverance, there will be success—nothing can hinder it—not even the burden of a large family need do so, though it may add to the difficulty. You may see this truth demonstrated any day, any where. Dan, the Smith, as he was called, was blessed with a help-mate stronger in mind, and quite as full of energy and ambition as himself. And this help-mate

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doubled his power. It was by her counsel and assistance that he had been enabled to secure to his children some advantages of a common English education. His sons, as they grew up into stalwart lads, full of strength and integrity, were, upon account of the excellent character of the family, in great demand in the neighboring village as apprentices and assistants. And in putting them out to masters, their father took the greatest care to stipulate for their schooling, as thus: John and Joseph, the elder sons, were placed as shop-boys in St. Inez, and the agreement was, that their masters should board them, and send them to a night-school. Their mother's wheel and loom supplied them with clothing. In after years, by the exercise of the family virtues, John and Joseph Hunter arose to wealth and importance. They became wholesale hardware merchants in Baltimore.

Daniel, the third son, and the future distinguished statesman, was not, when a lad, by any means considered the "flower of the flock;" he was too fond of old books, of stray newspapers, and of disputing, boy as he was, with the rustic politicians of the neighborhood, forming his opinions upon the gravest subject with simple independence, and standing by them with indomitable resolution. What if, in after years, with more experience, and a maturer judgment, he modified many of these opinions? His having formed and stood by them, at so early an age, proved great energy of intellect, and independence of character in the blacksmith's boy, and was prophetic of his future greatness. But no one then believed in his talent, or dreamed of his future glory, except his mother. And what mother of a great man ever failed to foresee the future greatness of her son? None, that ever I heard of, except James Watts's. It was through Daniel's mother, that he was refused to every shop-keeper and mechanic who wished to take him, and was finally apprenticed to Mr. Wright, the ablest lawyer at St. Inez, *not*, be it understood, for the purpose of studying law, and mastering a profession, but merely as an office-boy, to sweep the floor, make the fire, bring the water, chop the wood, run errands and post letters.

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It was stipulated, however, in his case, as in the cases of his brothers, that he should have the privilege of the night school, in consideration of which his mother was to be at the expense of his clothing. His father grumbled a great deal at this arrangement, which, he said, promised his son neither trade, nor profession. But the mother re-assured him.

"Never mind," she said, "you can trust me, and surely out of all the sons I have borne you, you can give me one to do my will with? I can depend upon my own judgment in this matter, and I can depend upon Daniel's character. Only put a boy of Dan's talent in Mr. Wright's office among his books, and he'll catch an education, without intending it, as the children catch the measles, and Dan has a set object and a strong will, and *he'll* get an education with full purpose of heart."

"Ye-es!" said Dan, the Smith, spinning out his words with asperity. "Ye-es, but what will he be? what will he *be-ee-e?*"

"I don't know—*exactly*—what *I* should have been if I had been a man, but what I am very willing to forego in favor of my son."

"And what's *that*, pray?"

"I don't know! Senator, Chief Justice, Governor."

"Oh!—while we *are* setting his future rank, why not let him be President of the United States at once? There's nothing to hinder it," sneered the man.

"Nothing on earth," said his wife, "be it so, if *he* pleases! *Let* him be President of the United States!"

Dan, the blacksmith, notwithstanding all his sneering, had the greatest possible confidence in his wife's judgment, and she deserved it—for, reader, the woman who has been first presented to you, in the second childhood of old age, was in her prime a woman of fine, though uncultivated talent, and Daniel Hunter, if he inherited the stalwart form and noble features from his father, was indebted to his mother only for all that was hereditary in his mighty intellect.

Daniel Hunter, on entering the lawyer's office, verified his mother's prediction. He duly attended the night-school, where



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he was initiated into the mysteries of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Besides which, all through the day, when engaged in the office, his eyes and ears, every sense of his body, and every faculty of his strong and hungry mind, was on the alert to receive every morsel of knowledge that fell from the conversation of those around him, as Lazarus received the crumbs from the rich man's table. And then books and newspapers were always at hand, and never withheld from him. He tried to perfect himself in orthography and penmanship, that when a fitting opportunity presented, he might offer himself to his master as an occasional copyist. He acquired, by perseverance, a beautiful and legible handwriting, and as a natural consequence, for opportunity always rewards industry and patience, he soon arose from his position of errand boy to that of clerk. There were other clerks older and better established than himself in the same office, but as only young Daniel had the patience, the confidence and the asceticism of genius, as he alone never hesitated or shrunk from any amount of labor, or any degree of self-denial, he soon and fairly outstripped them all. At sixteen years of age, he became his employer's confidential clerk. At this time he devoted all his leisure hours to the study of English grammar, history, and the natural sciences. He won not only the esteem, but the admiration of his principal, who set the highest estimate upon his moral and intellectual endowments. Mr. Wright advised young Hunter to commence the study of the classics and of mathematics, and promised to afford him all the aid in his power. Under all the difficulties of his position, by consecrating every moment of his spare time to mental culture, Daniel made rapid progress in his studies, and soon attained a wonderful proficiency. At the age of eighteen he entered a regular course of reading law. In two years after he was transferred to the office of a distinguished barrister in his native county-town, and at the age of twenty-one, was admitted to practice at the bar. Through all these years he took the greatest possible interest in the political questions of the day. There was scarcely a meeting for political purposes anywhere within fifty

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miles of his native place, at which Daniel was not present, and in the proceedings of which he did not take a prominent part. God and nature had made Daniel a politician and a statesman—judicial and national science was his natural calling, and he could not but obey it. At the age of twenty-five, he was elected to the legislature, where he distinguished himself as the champion of humanity and equal rights. His rise was thenceforward very rapid. Two years after, at the age of twenty-seven, he was sent as a Representative to Congress. At thirty, he was sent to the Senate of the United States. And at thirty-two, having resigned for that purpose his seat in the Senate, he was elected, as we have seen, Governor of M——.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE WAIF OF THE WILD WATERS.

And 'round them dashed the waters wild,
Loud thundering in their rage.—*Anon.*

But in briefly recording the political progress of the statesman, we must not forget the more interesting private life of the man. It was while Daniel Hunter was yet a village lawyer's clerk, that the most interesting and important event in his domestic life occurred. It was this. He had been sent by his principal, on a confidential mission to the city of A——. He journeyed from his native mountains across the country to B——. Thence he took a packet down the bay to the city of his destination. Railways and steamboats were not in use then

On his return up the bay, the cabin of the small packet was shared by two other passengers, an old man of reverend, clerical appearance, and a little girl, dressed in deep mourning.

She was about eight years of age, but her superior height, the regal cast of her regular features, and the masses of long jetty

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ringlets hanging down each side of her pale face, made her look two years older.

So strongly was Daniel Hunter attracted towards this beautiful, pale child, that he spoke to her, thinking it no breach of etiquette to address a strange little girl on the deck of a packet-boat; but the little lady deemed otherwise. Raising her jetty eyebrows with slight surprise, and glancing at him from the corners of her long, almost almond-shaped eyes, she moved slowly off.

The next afternoon, when the packet was entering the mouth of the P——o River, they were overtaken by one of those sudden squalls so frequent upon the bay. The skipper put his head down to the gangway, and vociferated to Daniel Hunter and the old man, his fellow passenger—

"Come, come and help us, or we shall all be in h—l in five minutes!"

Daniel Hunter sprang at once upon the deck. But before a sail could be reefed, the little vessel was driven furiously towards the shore, and capsized. They were all in the water. The skipper and the three men that formed his crew, buffeting the waves like lusty swimmers, and striking out for the shore. Daniel Hunter looked wildly around the heaving, foaming waters, for the old man and the child. The old man was never seen again. But the child was thrown up to the surface by the tossing waves. Daniel Hunter saw her cast her white arms wildly up, and uttering a strangling cry, sink again. He struck out like lightning for the spot where she arose—caught her as she was sinking, and throwing her upon his shoulders, so that all but her face should be under water, he swam to the shore. The skipper and his three men were already there. There was no one missing—no one lost except the old man. Daniel Hunter left the crew on the beach to wait till the squall should pass, and right their vessel if they could—and carrying his prize with him, ran across the barren coast, toward a pine grove, from the midst of which he saw smoke ascending. Here he found a farm-house, where every kind attention was given to the half-drowned child. It

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was with strange emotion that the youth gazed upon his "prize," as he instinctively considered her to be. All that he knew or guessed of her, was that she was the child of the old man who had perished—the child of his old age—and that both were foreigners just arrived. From certain signs of penury in their dress and conduct, he had judged that they were without means, and probably without friends. And now he believed that the little, beautiful creature, just cast upon his care, would never be reclaimed from him again. And at that thought, despite the catastrophe that had given her to him, he felt a strong thrill of joy, of the proud joy of *possession*, such as, in boyhood, he had once felt in capturing, alive, a beautiful eaglet! And standing over the sofa where she lay sleeping, he lifted the rich, black ringlets, and traced the pretty eyebrows, black, sleek, and tapering as water-leeches, with the same sort of earnest delight, that he once drew out the wings and gazed upon the bronzed and burnished plumage of the eaglet! He resolved that nothing on earth, short of the legal claim of some near relative, should snatch his "prize" from his bosom, and he did not believe in the possibility of such a claim being made. No, this beautiful creature was his own; the only human creature that he owned. His mother, his sisters, were very dear to him, but they were not his *own;* this beautiful little stranger was. The farmer's wife took charge of the child for the night; they also provided her deliverer with a lodging. In the morning, the little lady was quite recovered. And as her clothing had been dried and ironed, she appeared at the breakfast-table quite herself. She appeared to have retained a distinct recollection of all that had passed, yet was ignorant of her father's death. For, after breakfast, she came forward to Daniel Hunter, and with the air of a little queen, placed her hand in his, saying—

"Sir, I am very grateful to you for saving me; and, sir, my father will be so too, and will tell you so better than I can."

"Miss Augusta—"

"*Lady* Augusta," amended the little one.

"Lady Augusta, then, your father was—" he paused. How

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could he meet that earnest, inquiring, yet confident gaze, and tell her that her father was lost. He concluded thus,—"Your father, Augusta, has not been seen since yesterday."

Her start of wild alarm, her gaze of intense anxiety, almost unmanned him. But he saw that the only thing proper to be done, was to tell her the worst at once. He did so, as gently and considerately as possible, quite prepared for the wild burst of sorrow that followed. And after this first outbreak of passionate grief, it was pitiable to see how the little lady strove to maintain self-possession in the presence of strangers.

In the course of the day she said to him,

"I will ask you, sir, to be good enough to write to my aunt, and I suppose these good people will let me remain here until I hear from her—she will send for me—and—and pay them for their trouble."

The youth trembled for his "prize." He felt that under some circumstances it was possible to be guilty of an abduction. He promised to write to the little girl's relative, and at the same time informed her that she must accompany him home, and remain under the care of his parents, until her natural protectors could be heard from. This Augusta at first politely but peremptorily refused to do, persisting that she would remain under the protection of the farmer's wife, until she could put herself under that of her aunt. Nor was it until the farmer had totally declined such a charge, that she consented to accompany Daniel to his father's house. When the capsized vessel had been righted, the little girl's trunk had been rescued, and the farmer's kind wife had opened it, and overhauled its contents, and dried and ironed them, and then repacked them, to be in readiness when the travellers should set out again. In kind consideration of his charge, Daniel Hunter declined going upon the water again, and hired the farmer's carry-all, to take them to the city of B——, where they entered the stage coach, which conveyed them the remainder of the journey to St. Inez.

Daniel Hunter's mother listened to the story of the squall and the capsized vessel, with surprise and curiosity, and received the

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little orphan with much maternal tenderness. But little Lady Augusta cast her eyes, full of involuntary disdain, around the very rude room, and when the good woman wanted to welcome her with a kiss, the little patrician drew back, and up—and Daniel Hunter's mother, quick to perceive the slight, could not for some time forgive it. Nevertheless, for the short time she expected the little girl to stay, she treated her with motherly kindness. And Daniel Hunter went back to his office, at St. Inez. The next day he wrote to his protegé's aunt, the Honorable Mrs. Percival, whom the child described as an elderly lady, living on her own estate, in the west of England. But months of expectation passed, and no answer was received to the letter. Daniel Hunter's mother became very impatient, and complained heavily of the additional trouble and expense of the little lady—asserting that the latter was a real heavy burden, and a very thankless child, besides. This was too true—for little Lady Augusta, like most children, *did not know how* to appreciate the trouble taken, and the sacrifices made, for her sake. And so far from being the least grateful to Daniel Hunter or his family, for their protection, she often felt outraged and indignant at them, for giving her so mean a home as that mountain cottage, which had nothing but cleanliness to make it endurable. Nor did the little patrician take the smallest trouble to conceal her feelings and opinions upon this subject. It is therefore not surprising that the family—all except Daniel Hunter—imbibed a strong dislike to the proud, ungrateful little vixen. Daniel Hunter, on the contrary, thought her the most beautiful and charming eaglet that ever was caught—her pride and fire natural to her, and easily understood—yet he wished to see it yield to a better spirit.

As months slid into a year, and no letter had been received from England, and every face in the family was clouding up with doubt, Daniel's countenance was clearing off for joy—for he felt his right of property in his "prize" confirming itself. Had he, however, been asked at this time what his object was in respect to the child—what he intended to do with her, he could not have answered—for the present, she was his own little girl, and his

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joy, just as a wild fawn or an eaglet would have been—only in a greater degree.

Daniel Hunter's mother was a notable house-wife. She brought all her own daughters up to work. And when two years had passed, and the little lady seemed permanently settled upon them, the worthy woman thought proper to try to get some service out of her. But when she essayed to set Augusta to work, she found an insurmountable obstacle, in the nature of the child. From some constitutional or acquired antipathy or indisposition to manual labor, the little girl would not or could not even try to learn. And this necessarily increased the estrangement between the orphan and her protectress. And the latter would often say—

"I wonder what the little limb thinks of herself when she sees me sitting down mending her clothes, and Hatty and Lizzy washing her stockings?"

We might have answered her that the little limb thought nothing at all about it, or thought it was perfectly natural and right that she should be so served, and would have felt herself wronged, and been very indignant at any neglect or deficiency on their part. And so passed the time until the little Lady Augusta had been domesticated with them three years.

Daniel Hunter had continued, up to this time, to reside under his father's roof, walking into the village every morning, and walking back home every evening, and throwing the greater part of his income into the common family stock. But now the period had arrived when he must quit his mother's house. He was now a candidate for admission to the bar, and found it necessary to transfer himself from the office of his first patron, Mr. Wright, of St. Inez, to that of the celebrated barrister, Stephen Bell Golding, Esq., of H——, the county seat. While getting Daniel's wardrobe ready for this journey, his mother was unusually busy, and once more essayed to press little Augusta's fingers into her service, and failed in doing so, of course. The good woman's temper was provoked beyond her control, and she gave the little lady a round lecture upon pride, insolence and ingratitude, a

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harangue that was more remarkable for asperity than justice. Augusta sat in haughty calmness, deigning to answer not one word. But when Daniel Hunter came home in the evening, she declined coming to the supper table, and when that meal was over, and the table cleared away, and the family gathered around the evening fire, she went up to the stand where Daniel Hunter sat reading apart, and said,

"Mr. Hunter," (for she never could be allured into familiarity with any of the family, not even with her friend Daniel, so she said,) "Mr. Hunter, without my will I fell out of my father's hands, and into yours. You brought me here. Now, will you please to tell me whom I belong to?"

"Why, to me, of course, eaglet! As you say, you fell out of your father's arms into mine. Or, you were a waif thrown up by the sea, and I found and brought you to the shore; and, by all the laws of shipwreck, you are mine! Or, I may say, you are a young eagle dropped from its cloud-clapped eyrie into my bosom—*mine!*"

"Yours?"

"Mine!"

"And a queen eagle?"

"An eaglet!"

"Then I should not consort with *crows* who peck upon me!" exclaimed Augusta, flashing a glance of withering scorn upon Daniel's mother, as she rose and haughtily left the room.

"And that is the way," said the latter, "she often insults me."

"She has done very wrong, my mother, and I am very much grieved at it. I must try to make her sensible of her fault. Nothing, certainly, nothing can *justify* her conduct—and yet, my dear mother, there is much that *palliates* her fault. Let us not rashly and harshly judge the effect, without having duly and mercifully considered the cause. We must remember her birth, education and misfortunes, and her total inexperience of the conditions of poverty. It would take years to make her understand her real position and ours! Still, as I promised, I will



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endeavor to make her sensible of her fault. And, in any event, I promise you that it shall not be repeated."

So Daniel Hunter sought to soothe his mother's exasperated temper. But she treasured up the offence. Daniel Hunter spent the evening in thought. The next morning after breakfast, while all the family were together, he announced his intention of sending Augusta to a boarding-school. His mother dropped the work she was engaged in, and gazed at him in speechless astonishment and anger. Daniel Hunter went on to explain that, before his own departure to H——, he should take Augusta to E——, and place her at St. Joseph's Academy, under the charge of the pious nuns—saying, in conclusion, that he knew his little girl required better moral and intellectual training than she could receive from himself or any member of his family. Then his mother found her voice, and broke forth in a storm of reproaches. She told him that it would cost him, before he got through with it, at least three hundred a year—a monstrous extravagance! He replied, quietly, that he could afford it now from the profits of his office custom, without even diminishing the amount he had been accustomed to add to the family stock. She avowed, in a fiery manner, that if he had that much money to throw away, it would be more creditable to send one of his own *sisters* to boarding-school than this insolent stranger. Daniel Hunter glanced from the high, pale forehead, and intellectual and somewhat melancholy countenance of his own little girl, to the handsome, blooming, senseless faces of his sisters, and after a short pause, he said that the village day-school would amply meet all *their* mental needs, while his little Augusta, being endowed with a superior order of mind, required a higher degree of culture. This simple, straightforward manner of reasoning provoked a fierce retort from his mother, which was received by him with perfect composure.

The next day, he requested his mother and sisters to get little Augusta's wardrobe ready for her to go to school—a request they flatly refused to comply with. Daniel Hunter then purchased a hood and cloak, and took his little protegé to E——, and entered

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her for five years at the convent school, placing in the hands of the mother superior an ample sum of money to supply her wardrobe, and casual expenses.

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Daniel Hunter, engrossed with his profession, and with politics, his passion, did not see his protegé during all these years. It is true, he had not intended so to abandon her—he had purposed to visit her every year, but after missing the first annual visit, it was easy to forego the succeeding ones. Besides, the formal half yearly reports of the mother superior, assured him of the health and progress of his little girl.

These years were fraught with blessing and uninterrupted prosperity to all concerned—First, of the worthy blacksmith's family, the two elder brothers, John and Joseph, were established in a small but steadily progressive business, as hardware merchants, in B——. Daniel Hunter was rising rapidly to fame and fortune. Tabitha, the eldest daughter, was married to a neighboring planter, of that rare quality of mind that prefers, in a wife, worth to wealth. Lastly, a substantial stone house, comfortably furnished, had taken the place of the old forge cottage, and here the blacksmith's family lived at ease.

And to Augusta Percival these years had brought some knowledge and experience, with some of the wisdom that is the fruit of both. A girl's boarding-school is the great world on a small scale. And in this miniature life the little girl learned how to estimate the value of the benefits that had been conferred upon her, and from the meek, gentle and pious sisters she learned how to be grateful for them. She looked back with late remorse upon her childish rebellion against Daniel Hunter's mother. What if that good woman had scolded her occasionally? She had scolded her own children with a great deal more harshness, "for their good." And Augusta felt sure that, besides having no natural claim upon the worthy woman's affection and forbearance, as her daughters had, she had been far more perverse and exasperating than the whole of them together. And these considerations inspired the young girl with many good resolutions for the future.

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In the meantime, five years slipped away—Augusta was now nearly seventeen years of age. And at the close of the term, the mother superior, instead of sending her bill for the next half-year in advance, wrote to remind Mr. Hunter that the time for which he had entered his ward was up, and to know whether he intended to enter her for another term. This letter startled Daniel Hunter from his temporary forgetfulness. He had lost all interest in Augusta as a child and a plaything. The only remaining interest he felt in her was the generous one of a benefactor for the helpless object of his benevolence. With this letter in his hand, he went to his mother, and having long since forgiven and forgotten her treatment of his little girl, he asked her to receive his ward into her family. Now as Daniel Hunter was at this time the principal support of his father's house; it was impossible to refuse him this request. His mother granted it with as good a grace as it was possible to assume. Only she took care to bargain a little, as thus: that as she was willing to inconvenience herself, for his sake, he should show Ellen Falconer a little more attention. Now, Ellen Falconer was the niece and reputed heiress of a wealthy planter in the neighborhood. And Ellen had taken a girlish fancy to Daniel Hunter, as the handsomest man in the village church, and, as is usually the case, the efforts the maiden made to *conceal* her preference, did but serve to betray it—especially to the interested eyes of the hero's mother, who took it as another piece of good fortune falling to her favored and favorite son; and who lost no opportunity of urging upon him the policy of paying attention to Ellen Falconer. Daniel Hunter was far too deeply absorbed in law and politics to fall in love; but in fact he was soberly looking out for a wife, and so there was nothing in life to prevent his marrying Ellen Falconer, except the goadings of his mother and the evident preference of the lady. Men like to choose and court for themselves, or to believe that they do, which is the same thing to them.

So Daniel Hunter, without binding himself by any promise, set out to E——, to bring home his ward. He knew that

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Augusta had grown up, yet as he sat in the parlor of St. Joseph's awaiting the entrance of his little girl—the image of a *child* was in his mind. The door opened, and a most beautiful dark woman, of easy and dignified air and address, entered. Yet he recognized her at once! The unique character of her noble countenance had not changed, except to mature in beauty, and there were the same long, jetty ringlets, only longer and more abundant.

He arose, smiling, to receive her.

She advanced and placed both her hands in his, and raised her eyes to his majestic countenance, instinct with power and goodness, and an overwhelming, but delightful sense of gratitude thrilled her heart, and spoke in eloquent light from her dark eyes. It was a gratitude that could not be put in words—that must be lived and acted out—so her speaking gaze said before it sank under his eyes. He drew forward a chair for her use, and then seated himself. She inquired with interest after each member of his family, and testified much pleasure in hearing of their health and prosperity. They talked of several things, and then Augusta became grave and thoughtful, and finally, after a little hesitation, said,

Mr. Hunter, I have been reflecting that I ought to make another effort to open a communication with my aunt, Mrs. Percival. I would not do it without consulting you. But do you not think it is probable that the two letters you wrote to her, nearly nine years ago, might have miscarried?"

"I do not think it probable that *both* could have been lost. It is at most barely possible."

"In consideration of such a possibility, had I not better write?"

"If you think proper, Lady Augusta."

She slightly started, and even looked disturbed, at hearing herself addressed by a title she had lost for years, and he saw it, and added,

"Yes, upon second thoughts, I think you had better write, Augusta."



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She smiled gently, and seemed satisfied. And then they arranged their departure for his mother's house. And the next morning they began their journey. Daniel Hunter's family received her with tolerable kindness, and with an admiration that they could ill conceal. Ellen Falconer was there, passing the evening, and she met the young lady with an instinctive feeling of rivalry. Very soon after she became settled, Augusta wrote to her aunt Percival, acknowledging, however, to herself, that the letter was "bread upon the waters," without the promise. And after despatching it, she tried to teach herself to expect nothing from it. And she sought to be useful to the family that protected her. She subdued her dislike of work, and daily tendered her services to Daniel's mother; but the good though mistaken woman always coldly refused her aid, being told by her favorite, Ellen Falconer, that Augusta only did it to please and deceive Daniel. As weeks passed, and the politeness with which the family had received her as a *stranger* wore off, the position of Augusta became very painful. And certainly the most irritating element in her discomfort was Ellen Falconer. Now, Ellen was not naturally an evil girl—to all other persons she was good—but in Augusta Percival she had divined a rival; therefore she disliked her, and, *therefore*, with youth's logic, thought very ill of her; and, moreover, succeeded in making the family think ill of her. The situation of Augusta would have been insupportable, but for the presence of Daniel Hunter, who, in the interval of the setting of the court, was spending the summer at home. It was impossible to look at him, or think of him, without admiring him, and impossible to admire without adoring him—he was so great and good in every relation of public or private life—and she felt that she should go on adoring him to her life's end! There never breathed a prouder woman than Augusta Percival; she would have felt dependence upon any other human being as the most galling thing imaginable, yet somehow there was an instinct that made it seem sweet to receive benefits from Daniel Hunter. She looked up in his eyes, and felt that it was natural that his hand

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should lavish blessings, as his eyes beamed affection on her. And there was a prophecy in her heart that assured her all would come right in the end.

Meanwhile the Circuit Court opened its session, and Daniel Hunter returned to the county town. He held her hand long at parting, and seemed to hesitate with something that he had to say, and finally he pressed her hand, and left her, with the word unspoken. She knew what he wished to say, but not why he did not say it. Ellen Falconer soon after concluded her visit to her uncle, and returned to her parents in B——. And thus, if Augusta was deprived of her greatest consolation, she was also rid of her greatest torment. And months slipped away, and no letter came from England. And Daniel Hunter's mother had begun to cast up her chin and sneer, when one morning a foreign letter, directed to Lady Augusta Percival, and dated Florence, was put in her hands. She stared at it awhile, and then gave it up to its owner. The letter was from Mrs. Percival, who stated herself to be an invalid, for the benefit of her failing health, living in Florence, where her niece's letter had been forwarded to her. She further said, that her niece might get her friends to procure her a proper escort, and come at once to Florence, where her aunt would be happy to receive her, and having no children of her own, might possibly adopt and make her her heiress. The letter endorsed a draft for five hundred pounds for travelling expenses. Augusta read this letter to her protectress, and then enclosed it at once to Daniel Hunter. And two days after that, Daniel Hunter suddenly arrived at home.

Augusta thought she had never seen him look so pale and anxious. He sought an interview with her at once.

"Well, Lady Augusta? this letter?" he said.

"I have not yet answered it."

"Why? you will go?"

"Do you wish me to go?" she asked; then added—"Mr. Hunter, no one in the world has a right to dispose of my destiny but you—my deliverer, my benefactor, my friend."

"Nay, Lady Augusta, you must forget all that."

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"Never! Do you wish me to go?" she asked, in a deprecating voice.

"Nay, Augusta, do *you* want to go?"

"No! no!" she exclaimed, hastily, earnestly, and then her face was suffused with sudden blushes, and her eyes dropped beneath his searching gaze.

He drew her towards him, saying,

"I thought you did, my love! I thought my eaglet pined for her native sphere. Else, why did you write to your aunt."

"I do not know; it was in the uncertainty and anxiety I felt about the future."

"Augusta, will you share my future? It is not needful to tell you, dearest love! all that you are to me, you know it well —in a word, will you share my future?" He encircled her form with his arm, and for all her answer she dropped her head upon his shoulder. But he wanted words—the unreasonable man! And he persisted. "Say, Augusta, will you share my future? It will be an unsettled, wandering, tempestuous career —but will you cast your lot with mine?"

"Through life, and beyond death, if I may!" said Augusta, lifting her head up for a moment, and then letting it drop again.

Three weeks after that they were married. This very much disturbed Daniel Hunter's mother, especially, as she had sent word to her pet, Ellen Falconer, that Lady Augusta had been adopted by her wealthy English relatives, who had sent money to pay her expenses to England. She need not have taken this trouble, for already, in Ellen's childish heart, her fancy for the handsome lawyer had given place to a real affection for one who sought her love. The only thing effected by the news, was to give Ellen the erroneous impression, that Lady Augusta Percival had returned to England. And as Ellen's fate soon took her to the eastern section of the State, she learned no better—and as time and distance separated the families, Ellen remained under her mistake until unexpectedly meeting Augusta in the executive mansion, as has been stated.

After their marriage, Augusta hoped that her husband would

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have taken a home in the county town, where his business lay. And she was seriously disappointed, when he explained to her that he maintained his mother's family, and that his income would not enable him to support two separate establishments. Therefore, all that he could do for Augusta's present accommodation, was to furnish two rooms handsomely for her use. Her apartment was the *only* luxurious one in the house—and this circumstance excited the unreasonable envy of the mother and sisters, who had been so long accustomed to monopolize Daniel Hunter's resources, that they seemed to think they had the *sole* and *permanent* right to them—and that his wife was still a stranger, and an alien. And still regarded with a jaundiced eye —still misunderstood, and *because* misunderstood—hated—Augusta had a very trying time with her husband's family. With as much pride and temper as ever set a social circle on fire, Augusta still controlled herself, and forebore—how could she do otherwise than forbear, when she saw her noble-hearted husband so forbearing? Often she had seen her mother, when her high temper was up, fling an insult at him that was calculated to exasperate the most patient man on earth; and yet she had never seen Daniel Hunter give her a look, or a word of impatience, or disrespect. She emulated his self-government. She determined that no act or word of theirs should provoke her to retort upon her husband's relatives. And when he was by, such patience was not difficult—with him near her, she was so profoundly contented that nothing could ruffle her calmness. But if he were away, and her soul was longing for his presence—and they goaded and provoked her, then, all she could do was to be silent; it was not in the power of her will to keep her cheeks from flaming, or her eyes from flashing fire. They saw and noted the difference, and they misjudged her more than ever. It is not in the power of some spirits to discern the beauty of that love, that annihilates pride and self in the heart. They thought she was a coward, a hypocrite and a slave; they thought she was *afraid of him*, and put more constraint upon herself in his presence than in his absence. Oh, divine self-abnegation of true love! how little

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they knew of it. But with all this, Augusta's health was failing, and self-control becoming, therefore, daily more difficult.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE PLEBEIAN'S PATRICIAN BRIDE.

And she whispered low in triumph—It shall be as I have sworn
Very rich he is in virtues,—very noble-noble certes;
And I shall not blush in knowing that men call him humble born.—*E. B. Browning.*

ONE day Daniel Hunter had purchased a harp for Augusta. She had long desired one, and was delighted with the acquisition. She had it unpacked and carried into the parlor, where it was set up and tuned. Then she sat down by it to try its tone. Her joyous countenance exasperated her sister-in-law, doubly angry already, because their brother had refused them the gratification of some whim that very morning, and had now sent home this costly present to his wife. They began to sneer.

"You are very fond of music?" said one.

'Yes! and I have desired it as the blind desire sight!" answered Augusta, gayly.

"Humph! I reckon you would have been a stage singer if brother hadn't married you?"

Augusta went on trying the strings of her harp. Her attitude and air was so distinguished, that no retort could have so provoked the girls as her noble nonchalance.

"Singer! Humph! She'd have been a beggar," chimed in another, in a low voice.

"And our brother, who might have married Ellen Falconer, to throw himself away upon this penniless 'Lady Augusta.'"

"Lady Augusta, indeed! penniless as a pea-fowl, and proud as a Spaniard, the third remove from a king, and the tenth from a suit of clothes."

"But for all that not too proud to almost *ask* our brother to have her!"

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The indignant blood mounted to Augusta's brow. Rising with surpassing majesty of mien, she said,

"There is one thing about noble blood of which you know nothing—it is that it cannot offer or receive insult." And she was about to pass from the room.

"Oh! my lady is indignant! that is because *Daniel* is away. She ought to have *Daniel* here to quell her. For if she did court Daniel she found a master who knows how to make her behave herself!" said the mother, who had just entered the parlor.

Now this was very insulting—it was stripping the veil from her worshipping heart, and making her very devotion the means of humbling her in her own eyes, or it might have done so, but that the "perfect love" which "casteth out fear"—casteth out pride and vanity, wrath and egotism, and every form of selfishness!

"She wants Daniel here to quell her!"

Yes, it was very insulting! yet! no sooner was that beloved name breathed upon her ear, than the clouds fled from her face, which, suddenly, as by the rising of some inward day-star, flushed radiant with light and love! and

"Yes," she said; "you are wise! Name but that talismanic name, and you remind me that you are dear to him, and sacred from my resentment. I cannot be angry with those he loves." And with the face of an angel, she passed through the room and went out.

Upon another occasion, Augusta was very severely tried. It was one morning after breakfast when the whole family were assembled in the "big parlor." The worthy mother stood at a table in the centre of the room, engaged in cutting out household linen, and distributing the different pieces to her industrious daughters, who, with their steel thimbles on their fingers, and scissors dangling at their sides, stood around her, prepared to receive and begin making it up. And every now and then the good woman would cast wrathful glances at her daughter-in-law, Augusta, who had withdrawn herself to a distant sunny window, where, with her elegant work-box on a stand before her, she was agreeably "wasting her time" with sorting out bright-colored

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silks for embroidery work, an occupation of which she was fond. Daniel Hunter sat apart on a sofa on the opposite side of the room from Augusta. He was holding the last number of the Intelligencer before him, and was supposed to be too deeply absorbed in the leading editorial, to hear or see anything that was going on around him. At last the thrifty house-wife at the table would brook her daughter-in-law's graceful trifling no longer; but snatching up a portion of the linen, went up to the stand, and coolly taking the work-box out of the way, laid the bundle of linen in its place, saying,—

"Ma'am, will you be so good as to make up these dozen pillow-cases?"

Augusta looked up, arching her brows with surprise.

"I am otherwise occupied," she said, with calm pride, and resumed the sorting of her silks.

The angry woman snatched up the bundle of linen, and darting a glance at her son, who seemed buried in the perusal of his paper, she exclaimed,

"A proper occupation, indeed, for one who forced herself into the family without adding a penny to its income, while she doubles all its expenses!" and then followed a bitter taunt upon patrician pauperism, and pretension in general, and Augusta's in particular.

The blood rushed to Augusta's brow, crimsoning it all over, and distending the veins as if they would break—at first she could not speak, but then!—

She let fly a bolt, sharp, swift, and piercing as a lightning stroke!—a retort that smote the ears of the hearers like a clap of thunder! a fierce, stinging, scorching insult, that scathed its way through ears and brain, and heart, to burn there forever! an insult that struck all color from the cheeks of all those present!—an insult scarcely to be forgiven or forgotten!

A sudden silence and stillness fell upon the company, such as succeeds the fall of a thunder-bolt!

The lioness was at bay! She felt her power to rend and destroy! She was triumphant!

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But, suddenly, out of the stillness, Daniel Hunter looked up from the paper he had been reading, and fixing his eyes upon the face of his wife, said, calmly,

"Augusta, leave the room. Go to your own chamber, and await me there."

For a moment she hesitated—it was a terrible thing for her *now* to be humbled for them, and *before* them—her heart swelled to bursting, with anger, grief, and mortification—to curb her temper *now* seemed like checking a strong and fiery courser in his rushing impetuosity. A struggle took place in her mind. *They* saw it—she *felt* they saw it. She looked around upon her adversaries. She knew they were triumphing over her, and waiting to triumph more. Their eyes were fixed on her, and then cast down, while they smiled covertly—she felt they were waiting to see what she would do—waiting to see if she would disobey—to see if she would *dare*. Dare! She would dare to disobey the Autocrat of all the Russias, though she were sure death or Siberia would be the penalty, and would even prefer to do so if it suited her principles. Dare?—she would dare to lay her head upon a block and have it struck off, if she chose. Women of her own old house had done so for a less matter than the support of their own independence! *Dare*, verily!—she came of a daring race! Yet would she really disregard her husband's command and resist his will! Oh! but these mistaken, prejudiced people misunderstood his command, as they would surely misunderstand her obedience. Her cheek flamed at the humiliating thought! But she raised her eyes to her husband's face. She saw that he had been watching her tenderly during the two minutes that the fierce, silent struggle in her bosom lasted. Goodness and firmness were expressed in the set lines of his fine countenance. There was a fixed purpose—pendant on the event of her action—there too. She did not inquire of herself what that purpose might be. *Her* "perfect love" was without fear, as her submission was without servility. She only felt, as she met her husband's calm, grave gaze, that a revolution had taken place in her bosom—and that which had been



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difficult, impossible, was now easy and delightful. He had no need, if he had any intention, to repeat his command.

A fervid glow of emotion rushed over her face, and she arose at once and crossed the room, and laid both her hands in both of his with a look of such boundless love and trust, as elevated the simple act of compliance into an ovation. Not so he received it. To his high, intellectual, unimpassioned nature, it was but a reasonable obedience—a necessary yielding to proper authority—yet he pressed her hands that she had placed in his own, and his look of unchanged and unchangeable affection and confidence sent her away with her heart filled with peace and joy. They understood each other, and harmonized perfectly. And she left the parlor and went to her own chamber, little caring *now* for the misconstruction or the triumph of her sisters-in-law below stairs, who sat there thinking that she had been rebuked and humbled for their sakes, and that she had submitted in the poor spirit of fear and cowardice. No! for her heart was rising with emotion, inexpressible and full of joy—rising almost to religious rapture from the self-conquest she had been enabled to make. She thought of her husband—of all his noble qualities—of his disinterestedness and excellence in every relation of life—of all that he was to his family—of all that he was, and had been to herself; and she thanked God for making her a woman, and his wife, that she might be to him more than all the world could be. Yes, it was a delightful thing to honor and obey him—a rational service, a legitimate homage, and she joyed in paying it. And while she sat there waiting, wrapped in a pure, though passionate reverie, that sent the rich, warm blood tiding to her glowing cheeks and parted lips, the chamber door swung noiselessly open, and her husband entered. He came and stood by her, resting his elbow on the bureau, and looking at her, he said,

"I am glad, Augusta, that you left the room when I bade you."

She raised her eyes, refulgent with love and trust, to his, and asked,

"Could you doubt that I would obey you?"

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"I saw the trial—I saw the struggle in your mind, Augusta, but knew how it would end. In that matter I am perfectly satisfied with you, dearest; so no more of that. But I sent you hither, and have followed you to have a talk with you, Augusta. I hope you feel, by this time, how very wrong you were in speaking so insultingly to an old lady, who is, besides, our mother."

"I was incensed—maddened!" said Augusta, changing color.

"I take that into consideration; yet that does not lessen your fault. You were wrong to lose your reason with your temper, and now that you are cooler, I hope that you will acknowledge it."

Augusta was ready to do so, placing her hand in his, and raising a face, every feature of which was instinct with devotion, she said,

"I am ready to promise you, never, under any provocation, to speak unkindly to her again!"

"I said 'insultingly'—do not let us confuse terms. As a general thing, the aged are entitled to respect from the young; parents to respect from their children. When you became my wife, Augusta, you became my mother's daughter, owing her the regard of a daughter."

"But has she ever shown me a mother's love?"

"That should not, in the smallest particular, influence your conduct towards her. How often must I remind you, Augusta, that other people's observance or disregard of their duties does not in the least degree affect our obligation to ours. My wife will henceforth show our mother a daughter's reverence."

"I will do so—I will never speak a disrespectful word of her, or to her again," said Augusta, placing her hands in his.

"I require more of you than that, Augusta."

She answered him with a look of confiding love, that said,

"What *can* you require of me that I will not do?"

"You must go to my mother and acknowledge the wrong you have done, and ask her forgiveness."

Augusta started as if suddenly struck, and quivered through all her frame, as in great pain, and then grew as suddenly pale and still.

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"I know," he said, "that it will be a great trial to your pride, Augusta, but it must be passed through."

"*Do* not, oh, *do* not lay this cross upon me, Mr. Hunter! Indeed, it is heavier than I can bear!" she cried, passionately.

"And do not you, Augusta, beat the air, and waste your breath and strength by contesting the point."

"But this! but this! I cannot!"

"Augusta, a word with you before you go any farther. Did you ever, in our lives, know me to repent of, or abandon a purpose I had once formed?"

"Never! Your resolves were always too well considered to give occasion to change them."

"And I am resolved, Augusta, that you shall do as I direct you in all things."

"Am I not always delighted to do so? But this! oh, Mr. Hunter, this humiliation! Can you really mean that I shall pass through it?"

"You have justly incurred it, Augusta—there is no escape."

"And I a daughter of the Percivals!" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes.

"With all their heat, and pride, and scorn, that require a little chastening, Augusta. You have much to unlearn at eighteen!"

And he put out his hand and drew her up to himself, where he stood leaning on the bureau, and encircled her with his arm, and laid her head against his bosom, and said,

"Have you not full confidence in me, my dear wife? Do you think it possible I would give you any command that would really degrade you?"

"No, no, I am *sure* you would not!"

"I am only requiring of you that which your Bible would require."

"I know it. Mr. Hunter?"

"Dearest?"

"I will do it! Only let me know she is *alone*, and I will do it."

"That will not do, Augusta! Publicly as the affront was

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given must it be atoned! You insulted the aged mother, in the presence of her daughters, and in their presence must you ask her forgiveness."

"It is bitter mortification!"

"You will not incur it again."

"*They* will misunderstand it! They will think I act in a servile spirit."

"It does not matter."

"Even *she* may receive my acknowledgments with contempt.

"That does not alter your duty."

"That will be a *bitter, bitter* mortification!"

"I will stand by you, dearest."

"You will?"

"I will go with you."

"Then we will go now, Mr. Hunter. I can do anything you tell me to do—with you to sustain me," she said, and nestled on his bosom.

He raised her face, and kissed her forehead, and led her down stairs.

The table upon which the linen of discord had been cut out, was now cleared off and set aside, and the old lady sat at work, surrounded by her daughters.

The girls, after looking up, cast down their eyes, and smiled, slyly, as they saw Augusta. But Daniel Hunter led her straight up to his mother.

The old lady looked up, nervously, from her work. Augusta's hand lay still in her husband's, and his fond pressure of it encouraged her. With a sweet expression of countenance, and in a gentle voice, she said,

"Mother, I was mad this morning, or I never could have spoken to you as I did. It was very wrong, and I am very sorry for it. Will you forgive me?"

The old lady looked up, surprised, almost frightened. Was *this* Augusta, her haughty daughter-in-law, whose very forbearance, in times past, had been so much more scornful than any one else's resentment could be?



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"Can you forgive me?" said Augusta, sweetly, offering her hand.

"Forgive *me*, my daughter," said the old lady, rising, in deep emotion, and holding out her arms.

Augusta let go her husband's hand, and gave herself to the offered embrace, and as she felt the mother's arms *quivering* around her, partly with age and partly with emotion, she bowed her face upon the mother's shoulder, and burst into tears. They understood each other then—those two proud, passionate, erring, yet generous natures. And this day had revealed them to each other. It often requires a crisis to do this. When Augusta lifted her tearful face, she looked upon her sisters' faces, but there was not a smile there. Their countenances were grave and respectful, and a little frightened. And after this day no one misunderstood Augusta. Her sisters-in-law, flippant and impertinent as they could be on some occasions, were nevertheless the obedient daughters of a good mother. And when their mother treated Augusta with respect and affection, they very willingly followed her example, for they were good-hearted, well-disposed girls, upon the whole, and found it much easier and pleasanter to be affectionate than sulky.

And soon after this, by the death of her aunt, the Honorable Mrs. Percival, Augusta came into possession of the princely fortune. And one of the first things that the noble heart of the lady prompted her to do, was to place her old adopted parents in a position of ease and independence for life. And as years past, and the fine character of Augusta developed and matured, she grew in the affection and honor of the family, until she reached the point at which she was first introduced to you, and when she was adored by them all. And now, to return from this long retrospection, and go on with our history.

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## CHAPTER XI.

### A BEVY OF FAIR WOMEN.

O, sweetly is bedecked the bower, and gorgeously the halls,
Here treads the foot on springing buds, and there on velvet falls;
The many curtains' graceful flow, the vase, the painting warm,
Those household echoes, mirrors bright, revealing the fair form:
Exotics that perfume the air with odors sweet and strange,
And shells that far in foreign climes, in ocean wonders range;
With countless gifts in taste and art, with classic beauty rife,
Are laid upon their homestead shrine and grace their daily life.—*Caroline Gilman.*

WEEKS passed, and the inaugural solemnities, and the tragedy that followed close upon them, were forgotten. Other interests succeeded, and other matters engaged public attention. The Governor and his family were settled in the executive palace. Daniel Hunter had instructed his wife to invite her sisters-in-laws to take up their abode in the palace for the period of their own residence there. It had been a very delightful task for the merry girls to range from room to room, through the spacious suites of elegantly furnished chambers, and choose their own apartments—and much chattering, changing, and disputing ensued before they could be exactly suited. Harriet and Elizabeth insisted on having a large room together, which should be near the nursery—Lucy wanted a chamber looking out upon the city—and Letty wanted a water view, a city view, and a glimpse of a flower garden. All these several tastes were fortunately gratified—even Letty's, who found her difficult combination of desires fulfilled, in a room at the angle of the house, with windows looking two ways. I have not yet described these girls to you, and it may be well to do so now.

Harriet and Elizabeth were twins, twenty-five years of age—three years older than their sister-in-law Augusta. They were so much alike that one portrait will do for both. They were tall, full-formed women, with fat, oval faces, regular features, fresh complexions, and black hair and eyes. So far so well; but the smooth, low forehead, the straight, short nose, the full lips and

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rounded chin and cheeks, presented only the idea of unintellectual, characterless, animal beauty; and the highest expression of those handsome faces was a fine, wholesome enjoyment of life. In a word, they were robust, handsome, jolly girls, with nothing very remarkable about them, except their look of fine, hearty health and joy.

Lucy and Letitia were different from their elder sister, and different from each other; and cannot be described together. Lucy was just eighteen, and a beauty, if any one could be called a beauty, near the peerless Augusta. Lucy was of medium height, with a slender, graceful figure, elegantly formed hands and feet, small, pretty head, delicate features, fair complexion, blooming cheeks and lips, ultra-marine blue eyes, and golden, auburn curls. Her brothers called her the wax doll, and she took it as a compliment, and did her best to represent the idea. Blue and white were Lucy's favorite colors, and flowers her favorite ornaments. And as married belles were out of the question, and as, therefore, the beautiful Mrs. Hunter could be no rival, Lucy was certainly destined to be the attraction—the bright, particular star—the reigning divinity of the palace saloons for the season.

Letitia, or Letty, just sixteen, was the youngest of the sisters, the Cinderella, the Goody-two-shoes, the ugly duck of the flock; yet, withal, the romp, the tease, and the pet, as well as handmaid, slave, and scape-goat of all the others. Letty was extremely well satisfied with herself, her sisters, and her circumstances generally. Of her own face she said she would not exchange it for any other face she had ever seen, or heard, or dreamed of; or that had ever been created, described, painted or imagined! that no other possible combination of form, and color of features and complexion could ever do its duty so faithfully in expressing her meaning, as her own dear, true face. Nor would she suffer its beauty to be called in question for a single moment, either in jest or in earnest, by any one whatever, without bravely standing by it. Her face, she said, was all that a face ought to be, or could be. It was not only beautiful, but

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exactly perfect—and if any one could not perceive it, the imperfection lay in their own eyes, or in their own souls—not in her dear face. "And as for brains," she said she had "all the brains in the family not monopolized by brother Dan." And no one ever could tell how much in fun, or how in earnest Letty was, in sounding her own praises. Yet Letty's personal attractions would certainly not seem transcendent in a description. Her little figure was only tolerably well proportioned, and its movements were too brusque for grace. And as for her little sallow face, it is not easy, in a portrait, to do common justice to a countenance that depends solely upon its expression for all its attractions. How does this look, for instance—very irregular features, a sallow complexion, black hair, and light gray eyes! Ah, but the very irregularity was that which character, intellect, vivacity and goodness make—the wide forehead was filled out with mirthfulness and ideality—the slightly pug nose was the most piquant feature in the face—the large, but well formed mouth, expressed benevolence and enjoyment. Besides, her black hair curled "of its own sweet will," and clustered thickly around those full temples, and her gray eyes lay floating in liquid splendor below long, thick, black lashes, that cast deep shadows on them, like foliage on clear streams, and light and laughter lay slumbering in them, until, at a word, a jest, or a thought, they awoke, leaping into light! Her countenance was a bright, quick, true mirror of the soul—a countenance of ever-varying sunshine and shadow. Yet no one agreed with Letty, that her darkling, sparkling face was "exactly perfect," except one individual, who liked the look of it, of course, because he loved her.

Her brothers, Jefferson, Douglass and Nathaniel—or as she called them—Jef, Dug and Nat—young men who came between the twins and Lucy, and whose ages were, respectively, twenty-three, twenty-one and nineteen—were accustomed to teaze her unmercifully, upon account of her sallow, irregular face, always ending with,

"You'll be an old maid, Letty! just as sure as shooting."

"I don't believe it," Letty would say, "I should be very

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sorry to believe it, for assuredly it would be to some gentleman's serious loss and misfortune. But it won't be so: gentlemen have too much sense and taste! There!"

"Do you expect, for instance, to catch a beau this season?"

"'Catch,'—I shall not stoop to try. I shall use Lucy for that service, just as the lion uses the jackall. She will 'catch' a plenty of beaux—it is her only vocation—and if I see any one among them worth having, I shall take possession of him."

"And break Lu's heart."

"She hasn't got one."

"*You* get one of Lucy's suitors away from her, I should like to see you try!"

"I shall not try, it will come naturally. Lu always keeps me near her, as a foil, and when the gentlemen get tired of looking at the pink, and white, and blue, and yellow, that make the beauty of Lu's face, which they very soon do, and when they weary of her pretty 'Yeth, thir,' and 'No, thir,' they are ready to laugh at my pug nose first, and to like it afterwards—don't distress yourself, Dug, if I fail, it will be because I shall be very choice in my selections."

And indeed Letty's was the face one liked least of all to miss from the family circle. Messrs. Jefferson, Douglass and Nathaniel Hunter were—the two former, lieutenants in the army—the latter, a "middy" in the navy, posts obtained, of course, through the influence of Daniel Hunter.

Affairs turned out for Lu Hunter very much as all the family expected. She became the reigning belle of A——, during the fashionable season.

It is true that every one admired Mrs. Hunter, but it was with a deep, hushed enthusiasm of admiration, as of some being far removed above their sphere of thought and sympathy. And indeed Augusta was too much absorbed in the deep joy of her domestic life to be familiar with her social circle. Her life was a worship of unclouded joy. But the centre of all the interest in that mansion, was the infant, Maud. She seemed absolutely to be the first and last, the prevailing thought of parents, grand-

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parents, aunts, uncles and servants. She was the heiress of her father and mother of course, but she was also declared to be the heiress of a wealthy relative in England, who had recently sent out to the infant costly christening presents, and as gold or golden prospects have a sort of cohesive attraction about them, no sooner was little Maud's future English inheritance heard of, than her father's two elder bachelor brothers, John and Joseph Hunter, the wealthy hardware merchants of Baltimore, had made their will, leaving their immense property solely to Maud Percival, only daughter of Daniel and Augusta Hunter. And so the little lady was destined to be probably the richest heiress in America. And what was strange, no jealousy was felt by her young, unmarried aunts and uncles—they seemed to think no offering too rich to be laid on the shrine of the little goddess, and only felt, themselves, the want of fortune, in having none to bequeath to her.

And the devotion shown to this child was not only worship, but superstitious idolatry. Even Daniel Hunter was not free from it. Inordinate affection for his only daughter was the one sole weakness of his mighty nature. His first visit in the morning and his last at night, was to her crib. No matter how urgent and harassing the State business, or how pleasant and long-protracted the festive scene, he was never too weary with business or with pleasure to go and stand and gaze upon his sleeping child, until anxiety and weariness and time itself was forgotten in the fascinating spell. As for Augusta, she longed to be always with her child, and she loathed the social duties of her rank and station that called her daily from its side. She preferred its crib-side to the gayest festive scene and the greatest social triumph that could be imagined, and her low nursing-chair, I do believe, to the throne of the world, had it been offered in exchange. Although the most careful and trustworthy nurses and servants had been secured, yet one of the family always remained with the babe while the others might be absent at a dinner party or a ball. Augusta would gladly always have been the one to stay behind, but her pressing social obligations called her

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too often away. And it was generally one of the young sisters who remained in attendance on the child. And it was, perhaps, the greatest proof of the great affection borne to the babe by its young aunties, that any of them were at all times willing to give up a ball for the fancied necessity of sitting by her cradle all the evening. And when little Miss Hunter took her daily airings in the morning, it was not in the arms of her nurse, like another baby, but on the lap of one of her fond aunties in an open carriage. And if the carriage stopped at a confectioner's or a toy shop, and the people exclaimed, as they always did, "Oh, what a lovely babe!—whose is it?" pretty aunty's face would flush with pride and pleasure almost as vivid as if she could have answered, "It is mine." And the babe grew in strength and beauty every month. Coming, on both sides of the house, of a fine, robust race, and most carefully tended from her very birth, sickness never approached the infant. She was the very ideal of perfect health and beauty.

The fashionable season in town was over at last. The balls and concerts all forgotten, the theatres and public halls and "palatial" residences all closed, and the gay world dispersed, to the mountains and the seaside, and to fashionable watering places. Official business kept the Governor late in the summer at the executive mansion, and Daniel Hunter kept his family there with him. An excursion was, however, planned, to alleviate the heat and tedium of the July days. This was a steamboat trip down the bay as far as Witch Island, and a pic-nic party there. The members of the Governor's Council, with their families, remained in town, and these formed a very pleasant select party of the right stamp for the occasion.

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## CHAPTER XII.

### THE LONE ISLE.

They gain in morning's hour a lonely isle;
To them the very sands appear to smile,
And the hoarse sea bird's shrill discordant shriek
Seems like a welcome from his tuneless beak.—*Byron.*

THE day appointed for the excursion was the fifteenth of July, and the steamer chartered for the use of the party was the beautiful little Sea Mew. The company was to assemble on the boat at sunrise, and the boat was to leave as soon as the last members of the company should have arrived. Every member of Daniel Hunter's numerous family connection, from grandfather and grandmother down through all the aunts and uncles to the infant, were to be of the party. The fifteenth of July dawned, a splendid day—ah, little did they guess how fatally would end the day so joyously begun! At the appointed hour all the party were assembled on board the deck of the steamer. The sun was rising in cloudless glory! the bay flashed back the morning light in waves of liquid emeralds! A fresh breeze blew over the sea, fluttering the white muslin dresses of the ladies, and blowing back the locks from the uncovered brows of the gentlemen; the company were in the highest spirits, for the day promised joyously, and they were all resolved to enjoy themselves, as those only can, released from harassing cares, to revel a few hours with each other and with nature. There was but one child on board—little Maud Hunter—and excited as all the wearied city party were with the prospect of the wild sea trip, the greatest interest was shown in *her*. She was taken from the arms of Stella, her pretty nurse, and passed from one to another of both ladies and gentlemen, and admired to excess. And, in truth, little Maud looked very beautiful; and it seemed no exaggeration at all to call her a little seraph. She seemed one without the wings. She was dressed in one of those white em-



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broidered robes made for her by her doting aunties, the snowy arms and bosom were bare, and her soft, golden hair was just long enough to train in little short ringlets on her fair temples, over her tiny ears and around the nape of her neck; her round forehead was white as snow, her cheeks and lips tinted with the most delicate rose bloom, and her fair, blue eyes dancing with baby joy, as she was handed from one to another; and her little arms were always ready to clasp the neck of any who kindly fondled her, and her rosy lips were put up to kiss any lips that smiled on her, so loving and so fearless was her nature. She went to every stranger that held out his or her arms to her, and fluttered down upon their bosom playfully and lovingly, as if sure of meeting love. Sweet Maud! they were not far wrong who called her a love angel!—a *loving* angel she was, indeed, who won the love of every bosom upon which she fluttered down and nestled into, like a gentle white dove, and such a bosom yearned to enfold her with its affections, safe from every slightest pain or peril.

While they were caressing the beautiful child, the steamboat cast loose from the wharf, turned, and took its course down the bay. The city gradually receded, and the bay, or rather that arm of the bay, miscalled S——n River, widened before them. But few could leave the lovely child to look upon the lovely scene.

The breakfast bell sounded twice before the attention of the company was called to it, and even then the clerk of the day had to appear and verbally announce the fact before they moved towards the table. The breakfast was served under an awning on deck—the table was covered with all the luxuries of the season, and the gay party sat down with appetites whetted by early rising and the salt-sea breeze.

When breakfast was over, the company separated, as pleased them, into little coteries. Pretty Lu Hunter was, as usual, the centre of a little system of satellites. And wherever you heard lively sallies and merry laughter, you might be sure to find Letty the inspiration of the scene. Under the shade, on the

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breeziest part of the deck, in an easy-chair, sat old Hunter, the whilome blacksmith, with little Maud on his knee, and a group of young people around him—he was talking very earnestly—"fighting his battles (of life) over again" for their instruction and improvement. Stella stood near him taking care of his crutches, and ready to receive "sweet Maud" when he should be willing to give her up. Daniel Hunter, with his aged mother on his arm, walked up and down the deck, showing her everything of interest about the boat, and pointing out every remarkable site upon the coast—stopping occasionally to exchange a word or smile with some group of young people, and always walking slowly, and pausing when he approached the choice nook, where sat the old patriarch and sweet Maud, and his eyes would settle tenderly there and linger while he passed. And once as he passed her, the little one danced up, shaking all her sunny curls, and spreading out her arms to fly to his bosom, and he smiled at her, but did not take her, and as he passed he heard her little lisping tongue say, in disappointed tones, "He's all gone!" and his heart smote him. It was but a trifle—but his heart smote him more sorely still in recalling the circumstance in after years.

Meantime, on a divan in the "ladies' saloon," sat Mrs. Daniel Hunter, attended by Misses Elizabeth and Harriet, and surrounded by some of the most distinguished men in the State, who were wasting upon her *ennuyée* ear the most precious gems of wisdom, and the most brilliant corruscations of wit with like success—her heart was not with them—for "where the *treasure* is *there* will the heart be, and *her* treasure and her heart were on deck. But Daniel Hunter had signified his pleasure that she should entertain these gentlemen, and she was doing it.

The boat was well out at sea in three hours' run, that is to say, by nine o'clock, and by ten o'clock they reached Witch Island, a wild, desolate, sandy isle of about a hundred acres, covered with coarse, reedy grass, and a grove of gigantic pine trees—hence, sometimes called Pine Island—it lay some thirty miles south of the mouth of S——n River, and within a mile of

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the shore. The shore for many leagues up and down was sandy and desolate, and covered with a growth of pine trees, hence this section of the State was called the Pine Barrens. The shore and the isle were both uncultivated, uninhabited, and unfrequented. They had never been the resort of pic-nic or excursion parties. And it was upon these accounts that the isle had been selected by our party, and it was this set of circumstances that lent to the excursion something of the novelty and adventurous aspect of an exploring expedition. Nothing could be more dreary, gloomy, lonely and out of the world than this region, and for that reason it better pleased our joyous revellers—for what cared they for the deep gloom of the dark, interminable pine forest, or the lonely desolation of Pine Island—the dreary solitude only lent the abandoned shore and isle profounder interest. Pointing southward, the boat approached the isle; the features of the scenery were grand and simple, like all sea-coast views. On the east, rolled out the sea until it disappeared beyond the horizon. On the west, stretched the level shore, covered with the black, pine forest. The island, lying so near the shore and covered with the same kind of growth, seemed at first a part of the main land, until the boat approached nearer and ran into the sheltered, shaded strait that lay between the isle and the shore. There was no wharf, of course, but a little skiff was let down from the side of the boat, and the party gradually debarked, and landed, ladies first, then gentlemen, and, lastly, the servants with fishing nets and rods; with cooking utensils, and with hampers of provisions. When the first skiff load stepped upon the isle, wondering to find themselves upon a desolate spot untrod by the foot of man, a dense mass of myriads of water fowl arose, screaming, from their cover, and sailed away over their heads, darkening the air like a passing cloud. That was a new, strange object of interest, and the party watched them as they sailed over the sea and disappeared beyond the horizon. It was now but ten o'clock—they purposed to spend the day on the island, and return by moonlight, arranging to leave at eight o'clock in the evening in order to reach the city by midnight.

When all the party were landed, they formed themselves into

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groups, and roamed the pine groves at pleasure. But after a while the older members of the company formed themselves into small parties, and sat down to rest under the shade of the trees; while the younger ones continued some time longer to rove over the wild isle, exploring every nook and dingle, and making marvellous discoveries of shells, bird's nests, minerals and ossifications, until the fishing party was formed, and the gentlemen proclaimed that they were ready to serve the ladies with dip-nets, fishing rods and tackle, if they pleased to join them. Most of the young ladies of course pleased to do so—and among them Misses Harriet and Elizabeth Hunter, and Lucy, the beauty, who left fishing after men to angle for perch and cat-fish.

They went to the north end of the isle, upon the hard, sandy beach, across which the meridian sun now threw the long, deep shadows of the pine trees; and the gentlemen were soon engaged, and apparently deeply interested in tackling the fishing lines for the ladies, and teaching the novices how to use them—and especially in watching the beauty, Lucy Hunter, and wondering to see such a gentle, tender looking creature, with her sweet rosy lips closed so seriously, and her soft blue eyes fixed so steadily, watching her line with so much interest—when she felt a bite, flying it up with so much excitement, and with her delicate fingers disengaging from the hook the pretty, silvery, flashing tortured fish, with so much satisfaction.

"And that is just the way you treat our hearts," said one of her admirers. And the beauty smiled, as if she thought it the prettiest thing that had been said that day.

But laughing Letty, with all her fun and frolic, took no pleasure in any sport that was pain and death to any of God's smallest creatures, and therefore Letty remained with the old folks. First she joined her mother, old Mrs. Hunter, who, "on hospitable cares intent," was superintending the operations of half a dozen cooks and waiters, who were preparing dinner and setting the table—said table being the green sward, covered with several damask table cloths, around which it is presumed that the party were expected to recline in oriental style.



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After giving her mother all the aid in her power, Letty wandered off in search of "sweet Maud." She passed groups of gay people everywhere. She met Daniel Hunter supporting his father's tottering steps down to see the fishing party. She saw Augusta on the arm of a stately naval officer, to whom Mr. Hunter had especially desired her to "be civil." The gallant Captain Poindexter was certainly doing *his* best to be "civil," nay, briliant —nay, bewitching! But Mrs. Hunter sauntered with a look of majestic wearniness, and her proud, indolent eyes said, almost too plainly, "I wish, Letty, that we were out of all this, and at Howlet Hall again—or at least, that we could have come here alone." Letty smiled and nodded as she passed them, and threaded her way through the tall, dark trees in search of "sweet Maud." Where *was* the baby? She was tired and impatient with rambling through the groves of trees and groups of people in search of her heart's darling. She inquired of several strolling gentlemen if they had seen Maud.

They did not know—excuse them—who *was* "Maud," Miss?

With a look of indignation, that they should be ignorant of the baby's name, after joining in her worship on the boat, Letty would not deign to reply, but rambled on and inquired of others.

No one had seen her recently. Oh! where *was* Maud? Where had they taken the baby to?

Oh! there she is! *that's* the flutter of Stella's pink dress, and that the rich border of the baby's summer cloak flitting through the trees.

But Letty's irregular face, that could be so winning at times, was now absolutely repulsive with its look of impatience and ill-humor, as she called to Stella to stop till she should come up. Stella paused. Letty reached her, out of breath.

"Now *what* are you doing with the child so far from us all?" she asked, angrily.

"La, Miss Letty! taking her a walking!"

"But *why* do you carry her so far? it is *very* wrong!"

"Goodness, Miss Letty, I didn't know it was wrong; why is it?"

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"Something or other might happen to her! Come to me, you sweet little angel," said Letty, holding out her arms and taking the child to her bosom, and smothering her with kisses and caresses and tender epithets, as if she were a recovered treasure.

"Why, gracious me, Miss Letty, what could happen to Miss Maud, here? Why, it's as lonesome and as quiet as our own garden."

"I can't tell; something might hurt her."

"Goodness, gracious me alive, Miss Letty, what on earth *could* hurt the dear little angel here?"

"I don't know—snakes!"

"Snakes! Law, Miss Letty, now you know there can't be any harmful snakes on this dry, sandy island."

"Well, then, tree-frogs, owls: I don't know what! Don't question me, Stella! How dare you? You forget your place!' said Letty, beginning to scold—for there is nothing more provoking than to be told and *convinced* by a subordinate, that our emotions and our actions are unreasonable, at least, if not foolish. "It is enough for *you* to know, Stella," pursued the little scold, "it is *quite* enough for *you* to know, that we do not like Miss Hunter to be carried out of the sight and hearing of all the family at once. You know that we do not choose to trust her alone with anybody but one of ourselves. You are well aware that Mrs. Hunter will not permit her to be so left, even in her own house. Now, don't take her off so again!"

"My patience, Miss Letty! indeed I never *did* see a baby made so much of in all my days! 'Deed I should be afraid to, if I was you! I always heerd the old folks say, when a baby was made so much of—"

"Look here, Stella!" exclaimed Letty, interrupting her, "don't you ever let me hear you hint anything like that again! I am sure if Mrs. Hunter was to hear you give expression to a thought like that, you would very speedily be sent back to Howlet Hollow! Why, she would no more permit you to be near the child, than she would the witch with the evil eye!"

"I'm sure, Miss Letty, I love little Miss Maud as well as ever

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a nurse loved a child in the world! And if you doubt it, *see how she loves me!*"

"She loves *everybody*, the blessed darling! because she is one of the Lord's little angels! Now go, Stella, and see if Mrs. Hunter wants you for anything. I will take care of Maud."

Stella went on before, and Miss Letitia loitered with the child, sometimes dancing her, sometimes standing her on the grass, to practice her first little baby steps in walking, and sometimes sitting down, with her on her lap, and resting.

At last, wandering on, she came to an open space, where stood a single, colossal elm, probably the only one on the island, and where her brothers, Dug, Jef and Nat, were putting up a swing, for the accommodation of the young ladies. And Letty stopped —and after they had securely fastened it to the outstretched, gigantic arm of the tree, Letty got into it first, to try its security, and then took little Maud, to give her the joy of a fine swing.

And by the time she had had enough, there was a summons to dinner, and Letty gave Maud to Stella, who was sent to take her, and charging the pretty nurse-maid not to go out of her call, Letty joined the party at the dinner-table, or rather, cloth. Every come-at-able luxury, and the fresh fish, caught that forenoon, added to the attractions of the meal. Fruits, light wine, lemonade and ices, formed the simple dessert.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE APPARITION.

What art *thou*,
So withered and so wild in thy attire
That look'st not like inhabitant of earth,
And yet are on it? Thou shouldst be woman
And yet thy look forbids me to interpret
That thou art so.—*Shakspeare.*

It was four o'clock when they left the sylvan dinner-table, and four hours of pleasure on the island, and four hours of a

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moonlight run up the bay, yet remained to be enjoyed. After dinner the whole company separated into small parties, as before, the elders forming groups for the purpose of conversation and repose under the trees, the younger ones going off to the swing, whence their silvery voices and sweet laughter were soon heard in high glee; and no laugh was gayer than that of Letty, who joined heart and soul in this frolicksome sport. And so an hour slipped too swiftly away. And then the young people came and sat down with their elders, and proposed to give them some music. And the young ladies selected their favorite songs, and the young gentlemen drew out their flutes, and soon the "woods and wilds" and "solitary gloom" of the region responded to the joyous voice of song. And when the singing was over, two hours yet remained, and it was proposed by one of the gentlemen, that the party should go over to the main land to see what sort of a place the Pine Barrens was. No sooner proposed than carried into execution. The young people separated, and flew about to gather up scarfs and veils, where they had carelessly scattered them throughout the island, and presently all were ready, and waiting for Lucy Hunter, who had run off for her lace mantle, and had not yet come back. And while they waited, gaily gossiping and playfully chiding at the beauty's delay, three or four shrieks, sharp, piercing, following quick upon one another, burst upon their astonished ears. Every one had started up in dismay, when Lucy Hunter, pale as a corpse, shuddering in every limb, with wild eyes and disordered dress, burst in among them. She carried little Maud, clasped tightly to her bosom, dropped her into her mother's arms, and fell fainting upon the sward. In the greatest wonder and alarm, they gathered around the fainting girl, bathed her hands and her face with water, applied hartshorne to her nose, and finally succeeded in restoring her. Then they raised her up, and her brother Jefferson took her up in his arms, and she rested on his bosom, but was still too weak and tremulous to give any account of her terror. And while she lay there breathing irregularly, Stella appeared upon the scene. Stella, whom everybody knew, had

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had charge of the child when Lucy Hunter went in search of her mantle. Every one's eyes questioned Stella. But she gazed in astonishment upon the group, and evidently could give no account of it. At last Lucy sat up and quaffed a full glass of water, which, after a few moments, restored her strength, and then the impatience of her friends could no longer be restrained, and—

"What was it, Lucy? What frightened you?" inquired three or four, in a breath.

"It—it was—it was something like a woman!" answered the terrified girl, in faltering tones.

"Something *like* a woman! What!—why, Lucy!" exclaimed several.

"It—it was a wild thing! Oh, it was nothing human! Oh, I think it was nothing mortal!"

They gazed at her in surprise, in wonder, and in incredulity.

"Is not this sometimes called Witch Isle?—Maybe it was the witch!" exclaimed her brother Jefferson, by way of rallying her out of her fright.

Daniel Hunter now came up, and his presence at once restored order and quiet. Something he had heard of the alarm from the startled exclamations and disconnected conversation of the company. Now going to his sister's side, he said,

"Jefferson, set her down—she can sustain herself without your support now. Lucy, recollect yourself! You have alarmed and distressed our friends very much. I believe, of course, that you are only the victim of your fears and illusions. You owe it now to the present company to command yourself, and inform them of what alarmed you."

"Illusions!" said Lucy, feeling herself perfectly safe in brother Dan's company, much recovered, and also a little piqued. "Well, maybe they were illusions, but when I went to look for my mantle, I remembered that I had left it down where we had been fishing before dinner. And I called Stella, who was walking about with Maud in her arms, to go with me; and we went all the way down to the north beach, and looked about, and

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could not find the mantle. Then I thought perhaps I had left it up at the spring, but I was so tired, that I went up the shady bank and sat down, and told Stella to give me the baby, and go to the spring and look for my mantle. So Stella put the child on my lap and went away. Oh, dear!" said Lucy, heaving a deep sigh, nervous sigh.

Daniel Hunter gave her a glass of water, which she drank, and then she proceeded,

"While I sat there, with Maud on my lap, I began to arrange her dress, that was in very great disorder, and while I was pulling up her stockings and tying her shoes, and straightening her robe, I was not taking notice of anything else. And even when I set her upright on my lap, and began to smooth her pretty hair, and turn her ringlets over my fingers, to make them set prettier, I was admiring the dear little creature's patience and quietness so much that I couldn't think of anything else—till suddenly a shadow fell on us, and I looked up, and—God have mercy on us!" exclaimed the frightened girl.

"Well," said Daniel Hunter, calmly.

"Oh, I see her now!"

"Where?" asked some of the girls.

"Oh, I mean as she stood there then!" said the maiden, shuddering.

"Lucy, be so good as to control yourself! What was it you saw?" asked Daniel Hunter, in a calm, commanding voice.

"Oh, did I not tell you! Why, as I was turning sweet Maud's curls over my fingers, it grew dark, like a cloud had come, and I looked up, and—Ugh!—there stood such a monster! I suppose it was a woman—it might have been one of the witches in Macbeth."

"Or Meg Merrillies," suggested Douglass Hunter.

"No! Meg Merrillies was a Parisian belle, compared to that thing. Ugh! ugh!"

"Well?" said Daniel Hunter.

"Well, it fixed its terrible eyes upon me, as if it would hold me by them, and made a sudden plunge to seize the baby! I

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don't know how it was, but I had caught Maud tightly to my bosom the first thing, and started up, and then I screamed and screamed, and held Maud like a vice! Oh, I knew all the time that she could have wrested the baby away from me as easily as possible, but I held it tightly and screamed and screamed; and somehow or other, it—the monster, I mean—seemed alarmed at my screams, for after the first plunge to seize the child, it did not try again, but turned away, muttering like deep thunder, and I heard only two words, and only one that I could swear to; it was 'Murder time,' or it might be '*other*' time. And when she turned away, I ran as fast as I could towards you all, and when I saw several of the gentlemen running towards me, I thought perhaps the monster had seen them too, and that, and not my screams, had frightened it away. That is all!"

"Let the island be searched immediately and thoroughly. Gentlemen, will you do me the favor to assist us; will you separate and disperse yourselves over the isle, and beat up all the thickets, that we may find this stranger," said Daniel Hunter. And while he yet spoke, the gentlemen of the party gathered together, consulting and arranging themselves into small parties, to traverse the isle. But a trembling hand was laid upon Daniel Hunter's shoulder, and a throbbing forehead laid against it. It was Augusta, who detained him.

"Well, dearest?" he asked.

"Mr. Hunter, I beseech you—*do, do* let us leave this isle instantly! instantly! without a second's loss of time."

"Wherefore?"

"I do not know! I am sick—sick with terror!"

"Of what?"

"I hardly can tell!—of that woman—if it was a woman!"

"Augusta! you!" exclaimed Daniel Hunter, severely—

"Oh, yes!" she persisted—for once heedless of his frown; "oh, *do* let us be gone immediately. I shall not feel a moment's peace or safety, until we get back to the steamboat."

"Augusta! this weakness of yours grieves and annoys me. What! afraid of a poor, wandering lunatic—for such doubtless

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was the person seen by Lucy, and exaggerated into a monstrosity by her fears—a harmless one, too, for she did no harm. And you would have us leave such an unfortunate to perish on this island, rather than that we should remain to hunt her up and take her to some asylum."

But Augusta clung to him, reiterating,

"Oh, *do*, *do*; oh, *do* take us back to the boat instantly."

He forcibly disengaged her clinging arms, and sat her down upon the green bank, and said, severely,

"Calm yourself, madam, I beseech you. It is somewhat humbling to me to see you giving way to this worse than childish weakness."

And then he left her and joined the gentlemen who were going off to beat up the island.

Augusta remained sitting where he had left her, blaming herself bitterly for the vague but mighty terror that she could neither understand nor resist, and that had drawn upon her head such a rebuke from her husband. She could illy bear reproof from Daniel Hunter—not because of pride or temper, though she had an abundance of both—for from her soul she loved and honored him, and acknowledged his unquestionable authority, and no thought of her brain, or emotion of her heart, ever for an instant rebelled against it. But her desire for *his* honor and esteem, was something more intense than a desire—it was an absorbing, passionate longing—and to lose it for an instant, or to doubt it for an instant, was poignant pain—and at such moments, nothing, nothing but her immutable confidence in his affection for herself sustained her at all. She sat there resolving—not to put a constraint upon herself, and affect a calmness she did not feel—for that would be false, and speedily detected by one whose eye searched her soul—but really to conquer her unreasonable terrors, before he should get back.

In the meantime, Daniel Hunter, with his party, traversed the island from end to end, leaving no grove, dell, or thicket unexplored, but without making any discoveries. They went all around the beach, without finding anything to afford a clue to



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the whereabouts of the lunatic to excite suspicion, until they came to the part of the beach where the two skiffs that had been used to bring the company from the steamboat had been secured. *One of them was gone.* This excited much surprise and conjecture, until at last the missing skiff was seen floating alone upon the water at some distance between the island and the main land. And then it was supposed the stranger had taken the boat and gone ashore at the Pine Barrens, and then cast it loose to drift whither it might. The more this was considered, the more probable, nay, certain, it seemed, and the party came back to the spot where the ladies remained, and announced that the lunatic had taken one of the skiffs and escaped to the main land. And then the company began to prepare to return to the steamboat, as it was now much too late to think of an expedition to the Pine Barrens. The panic was well over. And even Lucy was able to laugh at her exaggerated terrors. Augusta, too, thoroughly ashamed of her unreasoning fears, had regained her usual self-control. When Daniel Hunter returned, she took the first opportunity, when they were unobserved, of speaking to him. Laying her hand upon his arm to arrest his attention, and raising her eyes to his face, she said, in a low tone,

"Mr. Hunter!"

"Well, Augusta?" he replied, somewhat coldly.

"Will you be so kind as to forget my folly of this evening?"

"If you will permit me to do so, Augusta. A solitary instance of folly is soon effaced from the memory, but do not deepen the impression by a repetition of it."

"I will not indeed, Heaven helping me!" she said, earnestly, keeping her hand still upon his arm, and her eyes raised to his, full of the devotion of honor.

But the man of mighty intellect did not share the woman's enthusiasm of love. He put his arm around her for an instant, and stooped to press a kiss upon her brow, and then releasing her, said,

"There, that will do, Augusta! There is an old proverb which my father used to teach me, when I was a boy, which I

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have not seen fit to cast away, now that I am a man, namely, 'Actions speak louder than words.' Show me by your actions that you have overcome these foolish fears."

The company were all ready for departure. Little Maud, in her summer cloak and hat, sat upon her uncle Nathaniel's shoulders, chattering and pulling his hair and whiskers, and playfully smacking his cheek with her little hands, and then tenderly kissing the aggrieved face, to make it well again. Two of the young men had gone out in the remaining boat, to recover the drifting one, and were now towing it into the beach. All the baskets, hampers, crockery ware and cooking utensils that had been used at dinner time, had been re-conveyed to the boat in the first part of the afternoon, and now, as Mr. Jef Hunter irreverently said, "Nothing remained but to get the 'live lumber' safely re-embarked."

The whole party went down to the north end of the isle, abreast which the steamer lay, getting up her steam.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE EVANISHMENT OF "SWEET MAUD."

Go where the hunter's hand hath wrung
From forest-cave her shrieking young,
And calm the lonely lioness,
But soothe not—*mock* not my distress!—*Byron.*

It was a most magnificent prospect from where they stood. And the east and west was so beautifully contrasted. Behind the dark pine-forest blazed the western sky, on fire with the setting sun, casting long shadows on the water; and away out at sea the waves seemed to heave against the dark and sombre eastern horizon, like a throbbing range of mountains, and out of its midst suddenly sprang up the golden globe of the full moon,

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gilding each wave with light. Before them, miles and miles up the coast, were seen the two points, marking the entrance into S——n River. And near them, on the water, rode the gaily-ornamented, little pleasure-steamboat, with all its flags flying, its steam rising in graceful white clouds, relieved against the back-ground of the deep-green sea and the dark-blue sky; and every minutest part of its form distinctly reflected in the crystal water below.

"Oh! it is a lovely evening, and we shall have a charming trip back to the city," said Letty.

And every one agreed with her. The skiffs were now ready to receive the company, who, as many as could be accommodated at once, got into them, and were re-conveyed to the steamboat. Two or three trips of the skiffs, back and forth, served to embark all the party.

And then the gay little steamer, with its passengers all in the highest spirits, put off from the isle. Some of the elders went into the cabin to recline in rocking-chairs, and some sat upon the deck watching the lovely evening scene with the placid enjoyment of age. And the young folks, never weary, promenaded the decks, or stood gazing with delight upon the beautiful vision of the receding isle, which, with its tall, dark plume of pine trees, seemed to be sailing down the seas. They insisted now that it should be called Witch Island, and nothing else, for not only had a veritable witch been discovered thereon, but the very manner in which the isle sailed down the water, proved it to be guided by supernatural agency! And all envied Lucy the sight of the hag, and made her describe "its" appearance over again.

And then they fell to telling legends of witches and warlocks, until the tea-bell rang. Everything was in beautiful order on the steamer, and the tea-table was elegantly laid in the after-saloon. And the company gathered around it in great glee, which was not in the least abated by one or two cups of the gentle, fragrant stimulant "that cheers but not inebriates." After tea the saloon was cleared for a dance, and the young

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people entered into that fascinating pastime with as much gaiety as if they had not been toiling at pleasure all day long. And the old folks, seeing that they could have the deck in quietness to themselves, had their easy-chairs brought out there, and sat conversing with each other, or silently enjoying the lovely evening prospect and the invigorating sea breeze. After an hour or two, the young people, weary of their dancing, joined them on the deck.

Augusta remained in the cabin, engaged in a much more interesting occupation than that of gazing upon the fairest scene that ever nature spread out before the eye of man. She was seated in a low rocking-chair, nursing her child to sleep, pressing the babe to her bosom, and singing in a low, sweet voice, as she gently rocked to and fro. The light was purposely dim in the cabin, but even by its faint rays you might see that the very soul of quiet joy reposed on the young mother's face. Her dark ringlets hung down each side her pale, fair face, and shaded, without touching the baby's head. It was a lovely picture. And so thought Letty, as she stole quietly down the steps, and coming to the back of the nursing chair, asked, in a hushed voice,

"Is she sleeping?"

And the mother smiled an affirmative, without pausing in her sweet song or gentle rocking.

"And how beautifully she looks! the dear child. But, oh! I do wish we had her night clothes, I am afraid her robe is uncomfortable."

"No," smiled Augusta, "it is all unloosed. Don't let's whisper any more. See! she moves!"

Letty ceased questioning, and sat down where she could watch the family treasure. At last the deep sleep of the babe warranted its being laid down, and the mother softly arose and went into a state-room, followed by Letty.

State-rooms and sleeping berths were arranged somewhat differently *then* from what they are *now*. The berths were placed *opposite* the door, and at the *back* of the state-room. Behind



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each berth was a little window for the purpose of ventilation. The window-*blinds*, in opening, swung *outwards*. There were no side guards, so that the window was on a line with the hull of the boat; and a pebble dropped out of the window would fall straight down into the water. This made it necessary to be very careful in fastening the window-blinds, when anything valuable was laid upon the berth.

Therefore, before Augusta laid *her* priceless treasure on the berth, she drew in the window-blind with her own hands and hooked it securely, feeling a satisfaction to know how hard it would be to *un*hook it again, and that little Maud never could do it. Letty also proposed letting down the window, but Augusta said,

"Oh, no! It will be too stifling warm for the little creature, and in her restlessness she might turn over and dash her limbs against the glass and cut herself."

"Oh, true," said Letty. "We must not let the window down. The shutter is perfectly secure, I suppose?"

"Oh! perfectly!—feel it!"

"Yes, indeed," said Letty, making the examination, "I could not unhook it if I were to *try*, I believe the hook is so tight and rusty. I say, dear Augusta, are we not *very* silly? Don't we make ourselves fools about this darling? Always making assurance thrice sure, and forever imagining that the laws of nature herself must turn back to endanger our child. Confess, now, even in this instance you feel a distrust lest something or other should, by some miracle or other, cause this shutter to come open, and—"

"Oh, for mercy's sake, don't mention such a thing!" exclaimed Augusta, shuddering.

Letty smiled.

Augusta was arranging the thin, white counterpane lightly over the little form, and fanning it gently.

"No," she said at last, ashamed of her weakness, "you are mistaken. I know in this instance she is safe—the blind can't come open of itself. Pshaw! to be sure it cannot! It is absurd

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even to assert such an evident fact! But then, indeed, it is perfectly true, my dear girl, that there is always a cord between my heart and Maud's, and the farther I go from her, or she is taken from me, the tighter it is strained, the more painful it becomes. I am never easy when the babe is out of my sight, no matter *who* she is with!"

"Even when she is with *me?*"

'Even when she is with *you*, dear Letty!"

"Oh! Augusta!"

"My dear girl, I mean no reproach to your affectionate care, but even you, yourself, are not free from the chance of casualties?"

"Nor you either, Augusta?"

"No, my dear; but each moment Maud is with me I see her safety, but when she is with any one else, even with you, how do I know but that the horses may run away with you, or something else might happen?"

"Well, Augusta! that's just the way *I* feel by the child, to tell the truth! I feel as if she never was safe except with myself or *you*. But, indeed, Augusta, I often feel ashamed of myself for such ridiculous notions, and I would not confess them to anybody but the child's mother—"

"Or some other child's mother, for you may be sure, Letty, that all mothers share more or less of the same feeling!"

They lingered, loath to leave, until Augusta perceived that their two forms crowded the little place so closely, that they kept all air from the babe, and made her very uncomfortable, and then reluctantly they left the state-room. Letty went on deck. Augusta turned back, with a mother's fond superstition, to be sure once more that the child was comfortable. Yes! she saw the babe was sleeping as delightfully as it was possible for a worshipped child to sleep—the light breeze fanning her—the faint rays of the cabin lamp falling on her white drappery, golden curls, and fair face flushed with healthful slumber. Augusta stooped and pressed a soft kiss on the baby brow, and another, and yet another, and breathed a fervent prayer over her, and still

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lingered and lingered until the voice of her husband called her away. Once more drawing the light counterpane over the form of the infant sleeper, she turned and went on deck.

"I called you, Augusta, to notice how beautiful the approach to the city is by this light," said Daniel Hunter, meeting his wife, drawing her arm within his own, and leading her to the forward deck. "Do but see," he continued, pointing outward, "what a deep repose hangs over the scene—the great city and port, with all its shipping, lies sleeping in the moonlight—and observe, Augusta, every vessel, with every mast and rope and sail, is distinctly reflected in the water—is it not beautiful?"

"Very beautiful! Moonlight idealizes everything, even a crowded city pier; but I like better to let my eyes fix themselves upon the dark—always mysterious, wooded shores of the river—or wander out beyond its mouth, upon the boundless, heaving sea!"

"Yes, it is sublime and beautiful, but there is something *more* sublime, *more* beautiful, *more profound* in the repose of this sleeping city and harbor! Look you, Augusta! a few hours since, and all there was rush, and hurry, and confusion—passion, care and racking thought—now, God's rest, like a benediction, has fallen upon the turbulent scene, and all is calm!"

"Alas!" said Augusta, "is it so? Do not many of those quiet roofs cover sleepless eyes, and throbbing heads, and aching hearts?"

"*No, not many!* That thought is as false as it is gloomy, and as unphilosophical as it is irreligious! You have taken it up as you take many ideas upon trust, from lugubrious philosophers! No, Augusta! at this blessed hour, God's benign repose is the rule—man's disturbance of it the rare, very rare, exception!"

They were approaching very near the city now, and very soon the steamboat touched the wharf. Carriages were seen waiting there, according to order, to carry the company home. In a moment, all on the steamboat was in a gay bustle; ladies looking for their bonnets, scarfs, and parasols, &c.; gentlemen hunt-

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ing up hats, gloves and umbrellas, or assisting their ladies with their light shawls and mantles.

Augusta left her husband's arm, and went down below, to attend to little Maud. There was no one in the cabin except Letty, who was standing before a glass, tying on her bonnet, and Stella, who stood near her, with a large lace shawl and an infant's cloak hanging over her arm.

"We have not taken Maud up yet," said Letty, "we did not wish to disturb the darling, till the last moment."

"It is time now, however, the steamboat is at the wharf," said Augusta, and she opened the state-room door and went in.

BUT THE WINDOW WAS OPEN, AND THE BABE WAS GONE!

Paralyzed by the sight, the mother stood—yet she did not believe the worst! She thought grandmother, or one of the young aunties had taken her up, and thrown the window open for more light—only that open window above the water—it gave her such a shock! She hastened out, still trembling, and asked, in a faltering voice,

"Letty, *why* did you take the babe up without telling me? It has given me such a—" and almost fainting, she leaned against the door.

"I! I haven't taken the child up! Didn't I tell you just now I thought I wouldn't disturb her till the last moment?" replied Letty, in surprise.

"Somebody else has, then. Oh! I wish they would not do things without letting me know! I am so nervous where my baby is concerned. Mother! Harriet! Elizabeth! Where are you, girls? Bring Maud here directly, please!" exclaimed Augusta, hurrying from the cabin to the deck.

"What is the matter, Augusta? Good heaven, Augusta? what has happened? You look so deadly pale and faint!" said Daniel Hunter, meeting her.

"Nothing—nothing at all has happened, only my excessive foolishness again! I want my child! Lucy! Lucy!"

Daniel Hunter frowned.

"You are really getting to be a very absurd woman, Mrs. Hunter."

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"Oh! I know it! I know it! but I want my baby! Elizabeth! Lucy!" exclaimed Augusta, hurrying past him.

Old Mrs. Hunter and her daughters were standing on the forward deck, ready to go on shore, when Augusta rushed among them—and afraid to give verbal utterance to the fears that her *reason* told her were absurd—while her every act and look betrayed them, she asked, in fainting tones,

"Where is my child? Is she wrapped up well? Give her to me!"

"What do you mean, Augusta? We have not got her! We left Letty and Stella to take her up and dress her. They have got her. Why, what's the matter?"

"*Oh! my God!*" cried Augusta, sinking down upon the deck.

"Why, Augusta! Good heavens, August—"

"Drowned! drowned! My child has fallen out of the window into the water, and is drowned!" cried Augusta, and fell upon her face, with a shriek which those who loved her might well hope to be her last.

Instantly all was dismay, and sorrow, and confusion. Agonizing questions were asked, which no one could answer. People hurried to and fro, and the anxiety, nay, the agony of suspense, spread from the relatives and friends of the missing child to the boat's rough crew—to find the child! to find the child! that was the one absorbing thought and purpose. The little empty berth was searched again and again, by almost every hand in the boat, in the mad hope, inspired by desperation, that one would find what all the others had failed to find. In the same desperate hope, every nook and cranny in every part of the boat, was searched and searched again; places where a kitten could not have got into, were searched for the ten months old child—in vain! in vain! No trace of "sweet Maud" could anywhere be seen. And gradually the terrible suspicion was *realized*—that the baby, in turning over in her berth, had rolled out of the window, dropped into the water, and was drowned! *But who opened the window shutter, and left it open?* The captain of the

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boat followed his own suspicions, and acting upon his own private judgment and responsibility, took poor Stella in hand, and threatened her with imprisonment and death, if she did not instantly acknowledge having opened the window shutter, to give the baby more air, and forgotten to close it—for he said it was so natural and probable that she should have done it, and who else *could?* Poor Stella, with streaming eyes and wringing hands, protested her innocence, and affirmed that she had watched by the baby's state-room door all the evening, and had left her sleeping sweetly, in peace and safety, only five minutes before she was missed. She left her to help Miss Letitia gather up the baby's cloak and things to dress her to go on shore. It was given up—the search was given up! All hope was lost!—the *child* was lost!—how many miles down the river, none could know—for none could tell the time of her fall. Stella said she had seen her five minutes before she was missed, but Stella's five minutes might have been fifteen or twenty, for all that any one knew to the contrary! All evidence proved that "sweet Maud" had fallen into the river, and was drowned.

All this time Augusta lay prostrate on the deck—not insensible—but seeing or feeling by a sort of clairvoyance, all the fearful hurrying to and fro, all the search and its fatal result. She had been forgotten by all in their terrible anxiety for the lost child, and not until its fate was ascertained beyond all possibility of doubt, did any bethink themselves of the awfully bereaved mother.

Her brothers and sisters then hastened in search of her—found her abandoned where she had fallen, and sought to raise her, but shriek upon shriek burst from her lips, and breaking from them violently, she rushed to throw herself into the river. Then they caught her again, and held her fast, while her husband was summoned.

Pale himself as marble, with anguish stamped like death upon his brow, the mighty Daniel Hunter came. Controlling his own tremendous emotions, that he might the better control her, he took her in his arms, pillowed her head upon his bosom, and tried

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to calm and soothe her. In vain! In vain! She saw him not! She heard him not! She felt not the close pressure of his arms around her! All consciousness of surrounding circumstances was lost! All sense of life was concentrated into one intense sense of agony, that sent forth short, quick cries—shriek upon shriek appalling the hearers, who prayed that insensibility might supervene, or thought that the death would be merciful which should put an end to her awful anguish! But neither death nor insensibility would come. Augusta's physical organization was much too strong—the tenure by which her body held her soul imprisoned much too firm—to suffer her to swoon or die. It is true that some faculties of her mind—memory, judgment, will, were suspended. She did not know—she could not remember or understand WHAT caused that terrible burning in her heart's core—that terrible anguish that still sent forth its voice in quick, sharp shrieks, or threw her into convulsions.

* * * * * * * *

The deeply afflicted family got her home, *she* never knew how or when. But they got her home and got her to bed. But days and nights passed without an instant's sleep visiting her eyelids, or a morsel of food or drink passing her lips. The most powerful opiates had no more influence over her strong organization than the weakest simples. Physicians as well as friends were baffled and alarmed, but dared not venture on the large doses that seemed necessary to give her sleep, and save her reason. And so she lay for many days.

In the meantime, poor Letty, with her own heart almost crushed, went all over the house, collecting everything that had belonged to the lost baby, lest, on the mother's rising from her bed, if she should *ever* rise, her heart might be torn afresh by the sight of them. She gathered all the handsomely wrought robes, offerings of love, and all the delicate under-clothing, and the beautiful toys, and packed them all in a trunk, in which dropped more tears than anything else. This was a sorrowful, sorrowful task, and it was not so easy to complete it. For when she supposed that all was packed and locked up, and sealed, little

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things belonging to "sweet Maud" would turn up in unexpected places, or come in with the wash. And at the very last, when she really thought she had quite done, and days had passed since the last packing, she tried to resume her accustomed occupations, and for that purpose took out her work-basket. But in it she found a hard cracker, that had been nibbled half away by the lost baby—it had the prints of her tiny teeth left. Letty remembered taking it out of her little docile hand one day when she was dressing her for company. She remembered the sweetness with which it had been given up; it almost broke her heart again. She could not bear to see it, and she could not throw it away. She went and carefully laid it in the trunk, and locked it up with the other relics.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE THEFT OF THE INFANT.

Oh! woman wronged, can cherish hate
More deep and dark than manhood may
And when the mockery of Fate
Hath left Revenge her chosen way.
Then the fell curse which time hath nurst,
Full on the spoiler's head shall burst—
And all her wrong and shame and pain,
Burn fiercely on his heart and brain.—*Whittier.*

LOATHING the sunlight, cursing earth, and blaspheming Heaven, the wretched Norah had fled from the gallows, one awful sight still glaring on her eyes, one awful sound still ringing in her ears—the vision of her son as he stood upon the fatal drop—a living man enveloped in a shroud—and the instantaneous click of the spring, fall of the trap, and the rushing whirr of the falling body! It was glaring on her sight, it was ringing in her ears, it was maddening her brain as she fled away. A pall of sin and misery and death seemed to lower dark and stifling over the city.

With her hand pressed upon her ears and eyes, as if to shut



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out sight and sound, she fled through the city, and beyond it, into the green fields, and past them, into the darkest depths of the forest.

Suddenly she paused, removed her hands, and looked up and breathed. She was a mile away from the city, in the recesses of the woods; no sight but green trees around her—no sound but the rustling of leaves and the tinkling of water—she was a mile away from the city—yet by the strange clairvoyance of madness, she knew that only that moment his agony was over, his heart had ceased to beat, his soul was in eternity. The "sigh of a great deliverance" escaped her! It was a sigh as the watcher by a death-bed breathes when the dread death-struggle of the beloved one is over! It only ends suspense—it does not diminish grief—it precedes the full realization of mortal bereavement!

But to the wretched Norah, with this sense of utter desolation, came a burning and consuming desire of revenge. Kneeling down where she had stood, and raising her withered and shaking arms towards Heaven, she cried to God for vengeance on the merciless, and vowed never to speak to a human being, enter a human dwelling, sleep under a roof, or lie upon a bed, until she had avenged the unjust doom of her son upon the head of his destroyer. What form revenge should take, she did not then consider—she made no plan—her thoughts were without form, and void, like the deep, fiery clouds that precede the destroying typhoon.

For days and nights she wandered in the forest, sustained by the fierce fire ever burning in her soul. And gradually, almost involuntarily, a plan organized itself in her chaotic brain, and

"'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, and life for life,' and a child for a child," she said.

And the more she thought of this, the deeper grew the savage joy of her anticipated revenge. She remembered how her enemy adored his child—she would wring his heart with its loss—she would torture his whole life with uncertainty as to his fate. Her plan matured

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She rambled back to the city. And, with the matchless cunning of concentrated thought and fixed purpose, *unseen*, she haunted the dwelling of the Governor, and the walks and drives of the child and her nurses. Not Maud's doting mother watched the infant with more persevering care. And, oh! could those who so tenderly guarded the babe, have known the terrible foe that was ever on its track! Had sweet Maud been left alone an instant in her carriage, in a room, in a garden; that instant would have been her last of home. But she was too well cared for. And the spring and half the summer had passed, and Norah's vow of vengeance was unaccomplished.

On the 14th of July, she heard of the Governor's projected trip down the river and bay. Not for one day at home or abroad had little Maud been left by her secret enemy. Nor should she be so left upon this day of pleasure.

With the surpassing subtlety of insanity, Norah managed, on the 15th of July, to conceal himself on board the boat. She accompanied the party down the bay. She thought the island would afford a good opportunity for the accomplishment of her purpose.

When the boat landed at Pine Island, she lurked in her hiding place until every one of the party had debarked, and had gone up to the centre of the grove, and were hidden by the trees. And still she lingered, waiting for Satan to send her an opportunity of getting to the land unseen. The opportunity came. One of the engineers, who had assisted in rowing over a skiff full of provisions, returned to the steamboat, and went down below to remain. She ascertained that all was lonely on the steamer, and on the beach of the isle. Creeping from her lair like a beast of prey, she found that no human being was in sight. Letting herself down over the side of the boat, she dropped into the skiff, unhooked the chain from the end, took the paddle, and swiftly sped to the beach, got out, sent the skiff adrift, and plunged into the woods.

Not fifteen minutes after that the engineer came on deck, and saw the end of the boat chain dangling in the water, and the skiff adrift. Entirely unsuspicious of the cause, he cursed his

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own carelessness for not securing the fastenings, and blew a horn, and telegraphed to the fishing-party he saw just coming down the beach, to come out and recover the skiff; which they did without mistrust.

Norah haunted the woods. But the day advanced, and no opportunity presented itself of consummating her vengeance. Once she found Stella walking alone in the grove with the child. And she kept upon her track, creeping behind trees, hoping the girl would wander far enough from the company to make it safe for her to snatch the child and throw herself into a skiff, and get off to the main land before assistance should come. But fortunately, Stella wandered in view of the beach where the skiffs were fastened, and where the fishing-party were assembled. And when Stella turned off and went up the grove she was met by Letty. So that plan failed.

The day waned and the child was safe in the bosom of her family. Evening came, and Norah, forced to defer her revenge for that day, took the opportunity afforded by the desertion of the beach, to wander down there with the purpose of taking a skiff and secretly regaining the steamboat.

But when she arrived upon the spot, what was her demoniac joy to find the opportunity she had vainly sought now fallen into her hands. There, upon the grassy bank, above the beach, and not a dozen yards from the skiff, sat Lucy Hunter, with the child upon her knee, turning its golden ringlets around her fingers! Lucy, absorbed in her affectionate cares, had not seen her, had not heard her!

To snatch the child and spring into the skiff, and put off for the Pine Barrens would be but the work of an instant! She resolved upon this with the swiftness of a lightning impulse! She darted down upon the child with the rush of a foul bird upon its prey! But the instinct of affection is swifter than that of vengeance. Simultaneously with the darkening of her oversbadowing figure, Lucy had sprung to her feet, clasping the child to her bosom, with both arms clenched around it like a vice, while her screams made the welkin ring!

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Lucy had said that she was sure the monster could have easily wrested the child from her arms, and Lucy had honestly thought so, naturally, but erroneously ascribing *great strength* to great size and haggard ugliness! But it was not so, the poor old mad-woman, worn out by grief and exposure, and want, and wandering, and passion, was no match for the young maiden on her guard, and armed with terror. And Norah knew it.

And, besides, Lucy's screams had reached her friends, and footsteps were heard running from the wood above. Norah made the best of her way to the beach, while the terrified Lucy turned and fled up towards the new comers.

And while Lucy was telling her frightful story to her wondering circle of friends, Norah cast herself into the lightest skiff, seized the paddles, sped herself quickly over to the steamer, sent the skiff adrift, and regained her hiding place. Upon this occasion, she concealed herself in one of the state-rooms of the ladies' cabin, locking the door on the inside, satisfied that if any one should come to try the door, they, finding it locked, would naturally suppose some lady of the party was within, and would leave it again.

So she remained resting upon the berth, and watching from the horizontal window at the back of it, the motions of the party on the island. She saw them running to and fro, and laughed to think they were searching for *her*, and—

"Ah!" she said, "they will make a more anxious search, and for one whom they will be more concerned to find before I have done with them!" She saw the two young men come out in the row boat to recover the drifting skiff, and—"Ha! ha!" she said, "they think it has floated off!" And then she drew the curtain before the window, for she knew that they were coming aboard. She lay there quietly through the next four hours of the homeward trip, hearing the party assemble in the cabin, and talk of the day's experiences, and of the unknown lunatic; hearing them, afterwards, leave for the supper-table; hearing them, later, assemble upon the fore-deck, and hearing the young people dancing in the forward saloon.



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Presently, in the last hour, something more interesting occurred. She heard two persons, the mother and the nurse, enter the deserted cabin. She heard the gentle voice of the mother directing the nurse to put out the the lights. She heard her also dismiss the nurse. And then followed darkness and silence, softly broken at last by the mother's low melodious voice as she sang and rocked the babe to sleep. Next she heard the entrance of another, Letty! and she listened to the conversation that ensued. Lastly she heard the mother and the young aunt open the state-room door adjoining her own, and lay the babe to rest. She laughed at the careful, loving colloquy between them, as they took one precaution after the other against any chance harm or inconvenience to their darling. She laughed when she heard them talk about the window, and each ask and assure each other that the window was perfectly safe. And she laughed more when she heard them go out and leave the babe alone. But soon she heard the voice of the nurse as she came and drew a chair near the baby's state-room door. And then Norah looked out from her window, and saw that they were approaching the city. When she turned away again, she listened, and found that the cabin was still. She looked through her key-hole, and saw that it was deserted. And then the heavy breathing of the nurse, stationed at the baby's state-room door, assured her that she slept.

Now, or never, then, for vengeance! It was a great risk, but it should be run! Stealthily unlocking her door, she glided into the cabin. It was vacant of company, except Stella, who with her head thrown back over her chair, was sleeping the profound, death-like sleep, only enjoyed by the child of Africa. Norah opened the baby's state-room door, and revealed a vision beautiful as that of a sleeping angel—the gold silk curls, and delicate blooming face of the slumbering child as she lay enveloped in her white gossamer drapery. There was not a moment to be lost.

First, remembering the mother's talk about the window, with fiendish malice she unhooked the blind, and swung it wide open, and trailed a portion of the counterpane out, as if it had been dragged there by a falling body!

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Then she softly raised the child in her arms, and gathered it close to her bosom.

Little Maud, accustomed only to love and care, and knowing, when awake, and dreaming, when asleep, of nothing else, half smiled as she was lifted up, and murmuring "Minnie," put her arms around the neck of her terrible foe, and with a sigh of tired infancy, resigned herself to rest again.

Norah wore a large shawl. Laying the babe flatly as possible against her breast, and folding the shawl closely over her, Norah stole from the cabin, and creeping along under the shadows, reached the lower forward deck, which was also in deep gloom.

The boat had now reached the wharf. A crowd of men were forward—some securing her to the pier, some throwing out the plank, some bringing forward baskets, casks and hampers that were to go on shore. And everybody was too much engaged to notice a new comer, who, besides, kept out of the range of observation.

Then Norah heard a sudden running to and fro up in the cabin, and she knew *they had missed the child!* Seizing a hamper, as an excuse, she mingled with the crowd that was passing over the plank, and gained the shore! Creeping along under the shadows, she gained the city streets, and swiftly and stealthily passing through them, she at last reached the opposite suburb, ran across the green fields, and gained the forest, the scene of her agony after bereavement. Here she sat down in the trepidation, in the breathless delight of an accomplished vengeance! She knew the hearts of those she had left behind were wrung with agony, as hers was once! It was very sweet! She laughed aloud!—her laughter rang through the silent forest! The child moved restlessly in her arms. She did not notice it. She was palpitating with joy at the fruition of her vengeance. She needed not to see the anguish of her adversary. She felt it! But the strong little child moved vigorously under her shawl, and heaved itself over, and threw out one of its fat, pearly arms. Then she opened its shawl, and fanned its robe to give it air. And then little Maud, wearied to exhaustion by the playing,

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and tossing, and caressing she had undergone during the day, fell asleep again. And now a dilemma presented itself. Her vengeance was accomplished, the child was stolen, but now what should be done with little Maud? Suspicion, on the part of its friends, of the theft of the babe, and consequent pursuit of her, was out of the question—the false evidences of the infant's supposititious fate were too conclusive to *them*. Maud was lost forever—drowned in the S——n River. But now that her revenge was consummated, what should she do with the child? She turned that problem over in her mind till near the dawn of morning, and then another question, less imposing, but more exacting, presented itself—where and how to get a breakfast?—for the poor wretch was famishing. She resolved to beg one from the nearest farm-house, certain of getting it from the benevolent country people. But first to make assurance of impunity doubly sure, she determined to undress the babe, and destroy all her rich clothing, and then wrap her, beggar-like, in some of her own rags. Softly and slowly, not to awaken the child—for somehow or other, with all her obduracy, Norah had a terrible foreboding of what the first waking of this innocent babe would be, and dreaded to meet it—so, softly and slowly, not to awaken the child, she untied and slipped off its robe, its shoes and stockings, and its skirts, until there was nothing on it except the gauze flannel petticoat and the delicate linen cambric chemise. She did not remove them—hardened as she was, she shrank from wrapping the tender form of the little cherub in her coarse shawl, with nothing between. She made a bundle of the child's clothing, resolving to burn them at the first opportunity. She tied the bundle in her own dingy neckerchief, and then, hushing the child, who gave signs of waking, she laid it upon her bosom, with its head on her shoulder, slung the bundle on her arm, arose, and struck into the forest. A walk of half a mile brought her to a farm-house, just as the sun was rising. Here she begged her breakfast, and ate it sitting upon a door-step, with the heavily-sleeping child upon her knee. She reserved a piece of bread for the poor babe—and the woman's heart in her fiend-

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ish bosom almost ached to think of the privations to which she was subjecting the *innocent* victim of her revenge. As she was rising to leave the door-step, the farmer's wife came to her with a little covered tin pail, filled with morning's milk, and put it into her hand, saying,

"Take it along with you, my good woman, for the poor baby."

Norah thanked her charitable hostess, and arose to pursue her journey. It was strange, but perhaps natural, though scarce six hours had passed since the consummation of her long-desired vengeance, her mind was already clearing off and settling. After taking leave of her benefactress she began to retrace her steps, for she had resolved upon her future course—she would return to her long abandoned home, she would take the babe with her, as the orphan of some dead relative left in her charge, and she would mature her account of it, while on her journey. Therefore, she retraced her steps towards the city, being obliged to pass through it on her road home. But before Norah had proceeded a mile on her return journey, the poor babe awoke in earnest, and would not be hushed to sleep again. And Norah sat down to give it the new milk, which the child drank eagerly. And not till it had drank its draught of milk, and thereby satisfied its hunger and thirst did the babe appear to notice the strange scenes around it—the strange nurse that held it. And then it was with more surprise, and wonder, and curiosity, than fear. Her blue eyes wandered all around the scene, and then turned and fixed themselves steadily and inquiringly upon Norah's face. That innocent, fearless gaze smote Norah's heart to the quick. She softly stroked the infant's head and neck, and pressed its form gently, and offered it more milk. But little Maud's eyes were looking down upon the strange, rough garment that wrapped her, and that fretted her tender flesh wherever it came in contact with it. And holding up one round, pearly arm, that was rubbed and reddened by it, she looked up in Norah's face, confidingly, and lisped,

"See!"

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For little Maud was naturally so intelligent, and had been so talked to, and taught, and trained by her doting young aunties, that she—a babe of ten months old, had several little words of her own. Norah stroked and kissed the little arm, and spoke gently to the child, and offered it milk. But the babe shook its little head, and lisped,

"No! *Minnie.*"

Norah gathered her things together, arose, and walked on. And the child, pleased with locomotion, and amused with the sylvan scene, was perfectly quiet. That was a blessing, and far more than Norah had looked for. Soon they reached the suburbs of the city, but Norah determined not to pass through it until the babe should be asleep again. True, there was not one chance in ten thousand that the child should be recognized by any one they might meet, but still that ten thousandth fraction of a risk must not be run.

It was now near noon, and Norah turned aside, and took her way towards a market-gardener's house, at a short distance. Here she requested the people to permit her to sit down and rest through the heat of the day, saying that she had walked a long distance that morning. And the old man and his two daughters, that seemed to constitute the family, kindly pressed her to come in, and stay till after dinner, which they said would be ready by the time Peter returned from market. While one of the daughters, whom they called Anne, was setting the table, and the other, named Jane, was dishing up the dinner, the inner door opened, and a young woman, dressed in course mourning, entered. Instantly her eyes were fascinated to the beggar and the baby. She went up, and stood and looked at them a little while, and seemed about to ask a question, but when little Maud smiled, and held out her arms, the young woman turned hastily away, and burst into tears.

"She and Pete lost their only child, about a week ago; it was about the age of this one, and I don't think they'll ever get reconciled to it," whispered Anne, passing near.

And presently the gardener returned from market—and as

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the dinner was all ready, they gathered around the table, with their simple manners, also giving a seat at their board to the wanderer; and one of the girls set by the side of Norah's plate a cup of their panado, prepared for the child. When dinner was over, and Norah had got the child to sleep, and covered its face with a gingham handkerchief, and was about to resume her walk, she was stopped by one of the girls, and a whispered conversation took place between the women—during which the young woman in black tearfully insisted upon something that the girls should do, saying, as they left to perform her bidding,

"*Only don't let me see them*—I could not bear it;" and she went into an inner room; and the girls went up stairs, and soon returned with a bundle tied up, which they presented to the supposed beggar, saying,

"Here are some baby clothes—everything that you can want—they belong to poor little Bud—and his mother will make us give them to you."

Norah thanked her. She was sincerely grateful to have some comfortable common clothing to put upon the child, whose privations were troubling Norah's heart with compunction. She even asked permission to retire apart and dress the child in one of the suits.

"Yes, you may do it—but you must not let Lilly see you; poor thing, you know it would hurt her too bad?"

"Lilly?"

"Lilian, little Bud's mother. You can go into our room if you want to dress the baby; and there is water there too, if you would like to wash it," said they, opening a side door, and admitting Norah into the little sleeping-room of the girls.

Norah desired nothing better—and while she sat in that small, inner chamber, giving little Maud the refreshment of a thorough wash and change of clothes, she heard the following short colloquy, that filled her mind with interest and curiosity.

"What were all the cannons firing for in town, to-day, Peter?" asked Jane.

"Don't you know? Oh! this world is full of trouble," said the gardener, gloomily.

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"Well there, Peter, if it is, you ought to be glad that poor, dear little Buddy is gone out of it to Heaven; and not always be looking and talking *that* way. But what was the cannon firing for?"

"I told you, this world is full of trouble; nobody gets shut of it, not even the Governor; the Governor's lost *his* only child."

"Indeed! I am *very* sorry; but—but I didn't know in *this* country they fired artillery when *any* baby died."

"Oh!" exclaimed Peter, shuffling his feet in an irritated manner; "who says they *do?* But the Governor's child just as they were all coming back from that sea trip, fell overboard near the wharf, and was drowned; and they have been firing over the water all day in hopes of raising the body."

"Oh! the poor parents!"

"The world is full of trouble," repeated Peter Jones, mournfully, and relapsed into silence.

And Norah, having completed the washing and dressing of the babe, and got the wearied little one again to sleep, came out and thanked, and took leave of the kind family, and then settled the child more comfortably across her bosom, with its head on her shoulder, and gathered her bundle on her arm, and sat out on her journey.

Norah passed through the city safe from interruption that afternoon. The artillery was still thundering, at intervals, over the water. And she smiled sardonically, when she heard loungers at street corners, asking each other in hushed tones, if *the body* had been raised, or if it really were possible that it could be. And everywhere, as she glided along, her eager, hungry ear was feasted with accounts of the deep despair and anguish of the Governor's family. And so she passed through the city, and gained the river road that led to her own neighborhood—determined to continue her journey by moonlight. But we must precede her to Ellen O'Leary's sylvan home.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE YOUNG WIDOW'S FOREST HOME.

A green and silent spot amid the hills,
A small and silent dell! O'er stiller place
No singing sky-lark ever poised herself.
Oh, 'tis a quiet spirit-healing nook,
Which all, methinks, would love—but chiefly she—
The humble one who, in her youthful years,
Knew just so much of sorrow as had made
Her early womanhood securely wise.—*Coleridge.*

When that awful day—that day of darkest doom was over—when the last sorrowful offices of love, and the last solemn rites of religion had been performed for the dead, and when all efforts to recover the living and the lost had failed, and been abandoned, and when the youthful widow could remain no longer absent from her ill and orphaned boy,—then Father Goodrich placed his parish for a week under the sole charge of his colleague, and harnessed up the little donkey-cart to take Ellen and her child home. To the poor young widow this was a very sorrowful journey, full of harrowing recollections and associations. In passing every familiar scene he loved so well, her heart bled afresh—and on reaching the chosen spot of which he had spoken so hopefully on the last dark day of his life, her grief burst forth with passionate violence. And nothing could have sustained her through this last trial but the presence, the prayers, and the religious consolations offered by the good priest.

It was late in the evening when they reached Deep Dingle, the forest home of Ellen. It was a gray rock cottage, overgrown with moss and creeping vines, and overshadowed by high, wooded hills. There was no cultivated ground near it, except a small garden, with a few fruit trees, enclosed by a low stone wall, moss-grown and covered with creepers, like the cottage. As the little old donkey-cart wound slowly and carefully down the rocky hill, old Abishag, the nurse, stood watching at the



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cottage gate. And when it drew up and stopped, and Ellen got out, the old servant came forward to meet her, and the young widow burst into a flood of tears, and threw herself, weeping, into the arms of the faithful and affectionate creature.

That told the tale!

Ellen almost instantly disengaged herself, and asking how the sick boy was, without waiting for the answer, rushed into the house, to ascertain for herself.

"And where is the old mistress?" asked Abishag, as she received the young baby from the arms of Father Goodrich.

"We do not know—she has been missing since the day of the execution. When I return to the city, I shall prosecute the search for her. And now, Abishag, you must not afflict your young mistress with any questions or comments upon anything that has occurred in the city. You must not even give her the least encouragement to talk about those things, even if she is disposed to do so; but try to draw her mind off, and interest her in the affairs of the house-keeping and the children. How is the sick child?"

"A good deal worse, sir," said old Abishag, heaving a deep sigh at these accumulated troubles.

The priest hastened into the house, where he found Ellen in the extremity of anxiety, by the bedside of her boy, who was rolling about in the delirium of fever, and piteously calling for the mother, who, unrecognized, bent over him.

The imminent danger of this child was of the greatest benefit to Ellen. It aroused her from the deep despair that might else have been fatal. It taught her, by the fear of losing them, how great the blessings were that yet remained to bind her to life—to excite her to action. The extreme illness of her boy lasted several days, and when the crisis of life and death was safely passed, and the child lived, Ellen experienced what she never thought to feel again—joy, gratitude to God, hope for the future! She was enabled to listen to the practical advice of Father Goodrich, who had remained with her during this danger. The priest advised her to write to her wealthy relatives—who had,

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indeed, disowned Ellen ever since her love marriage with poor William O'Leary, but who, if they had hearts of flesh, must pity and succor her in her heavy misfortunes. Ellen was not composed enough to write, but she permitted Father Goodrich to write for her. And the priest still deferred his departure until an answer should be received.

It came,—a hard, unchristian letter, the pith of which was a coarse and vulgar proverb: "As Ellen had made her bed she must lie upon it," and this last disgrace of her husband's death on the gallows, forever precluded the possibility of a recognition of her by her family. It was a letter to which there could be no possible answer.

"Leave them to God, my poor lamb—leave them to God," said the good priest; "all our acts are seeds sown in the present to be reaped in the future. They are sowing—they are sowing. Let's wait and see what they will reap!"

"I have no claim upon them," said Ellen, quietly. "I chose for myself—and do not now, Heaven is my witness, repent my choice, though it has led me down into the darkness of the shadow of death. Willie——"

But here her voice broke down in tears and sobs, and she wept convulsively, and exhausted the fit before she was able to go on speaking.

"Willie was no murderer, though he died a murderer's death! Willie was good, and I had rather now be his poor widow than the wife of that rich man they wished me to marry. It is not that. But, oh! I will admit to you, that there is something that tries my faith beyond all things—that tries, and crushes, and almost destroys my faith!"

"And what is that, my child?"

"Oh! it is to look around into the world and see how guilt thrives—how virtue suffers; to look around me and see how selfishness, injustice, pride, and cruelty, prosper, increase, and enjoy—while the disinterested, the just, the merciful, and the humble, fail and suffer and lose. And to remember, Father, that there is a righteous, all-powerful God above all, who sees and does not interfere."

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"My child, you must remember that, above all, God has given to his creatures FREE-WILL; his government of the world is a MORAL government. When he sees the oppressor triumph, he does not strike him down with a thunderbolt—even to rescue his own oppressed child from unmerited suffering. Such an act, however it might suit *our* notions of prompt justice, would destroy our free-agency and God's moral government, and constitute him a tyrant, and his glorious universe a universe of slaves—governed through terror. No, Ellen, the Lord speaks to the *conscience* of the oppressor—if he will but hear the unobtrusive, 'still small voice'—he speaks to the broken *heart* of the oppressed, inspiring it to seek him, and pouring Divine balm and comfort over it. And when the life of probation is over, and both the oppressor and the oppressed shall stand before his judgment-seat—then shall they both receive of the fruits of their lives. Oh! let wronged, oppressed, and suffering hearts, think of this—think of this, and bear up! The prosperous wrong-*doer* seems very happy—very happy, no doubt—and has everything in this world his own way; and he drowns the 'still small voice' of conscience in the convivial chorus song of the passions; but let him know that the God whom he has forgotten, has not forgotten *him*. And the poor wrong-*sufferer* seems very hapless, certainly—even the oppressor in his very best moods, half pities while he despises him; and if it were not for selfishness, would deal him more justice; but let the victim know that the God who does not yet interfere—still sees, still watches, and still waits—that he sympathizes with his sorrows, rejoices in his patience, and will finally bless his love with a blessing inconceivable and full of joy—for 'eye hath not seen, ear heard, nor hath it entered into the imagination of the heart, to conceive the joys that God has prepared for those that love him.'"

"But, my dear child," said the priest, after a thoughtful pause, "do not fall into the sad but common mistake of the virtuous unfortunate, and falsely imagine that prosperity and success attend sin and selfishness alone, while misfortune and adversity wait only on the foosteps of righteousness. It is not

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always so, even in this world of imperfection and trial—God forbid! No! 'Godliness is profitable in all things, having the promise of the world that *now* is, and of that which is to come'—this is the rule, my dear child, and the reverse of it is the exception."

"But, Father! the exception is much more striking than the rule!"

"Because the rule is common place—the exception rare—therefore the exception is much more apt to impress than the rule."

Since the refusal of her relatives to assist her, it became necessary for Ellen to reflect and decide—or rather for Father Goodrich to reflect and decide for her upon what should be done for the support of the family. Ellen was skillful in various kinds of fine needle-work; she was also a good scholar. Here, in her forest home, there was certainly no market for her labor, in either capacity of seamstress or teacher; but in the city she could certainly find employment for so dexterous a needle as hers, and she *might* even get pupils, though the latter was doubtful. Alas! for the memory, for the shame of her husband's death! the shadow of that gallows tree lengthened dark along all her future path of life! After much consultation, it was arranged that Ellen should give up her home at the end of the next quarter, and remove to town, and that, in the meantime, Father Goodrich should go thither, and try to interest some of the ladies of his congregation for his poor, young protegé. So, after having remained in the neighborhood a fortnight, Father Goodrich took leave of Ellen and returned to town. And the young widow was left with her children in her sylvan home, to be nursed back to health of mind and body by the holy inspirations of religion, the peaceful ministrations of nature, and the healing influences of time. The good priest regularly corresponded with her, encouraged her much in regard to her future prospects in the city, and comforted her always with his pious counsels. But though in every letter she inquired, and though he still kept up the search, he could give her no information,



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because he could obtain none, of Norah. The private misgiving of the priest was, that Norah, upon the day of her son's death, had, in a fit of frenzy, drowned herself. But he shrunk from giving this opinion expression. Ellen, on the contrary, had no such thought. She knew her mother-in-law had relatives scattered all through the mountainous districts of the state. And Ellen imagined that, on the day of the execution, Norah had fled from the scene of her anguish, and taken refuge among them. Therefore, Ellen continually expected to hear from her. And thus nearly three months went by, when, one evening, the seventeenth of July, Ellen sat on her door-step, soothing her still delicate boy to sleep, and herself soothed into peace by the beauty of the sylvan scene, and the stillness of the evening. Suddenly a shadow fell upon her, and she raised her eyes. Norah stood before her. With an exclamation of surprise and joy, Ellen sprang up, put the boy down, and caught the wanderer in her arms, crying,

"Oh, mother! is this you, sure enough! Oh, mother! I am so—so glad! so—"

And Ellen burst into tears. Norah did not return her embrace. Norah could not; her arms were locked tightly around something that she carried on her bosom; but she said, faintly,

"Ellen, move out of my way at once, and let me come in and sit down, for I am almost dead!"

And Ellen, with affectionnte and anxious trepidation, pushed the door wide open, and drew forward the old cushioned chair. And Norah sank into it heavily, and with a deep groan, and uncovered the sleeping child and laid it on her knees. Ellen drew near, and gazed with surprise and curiosity, and tender interest, and then exclaimed, interrogatively,

"A baby, my mother. Why, where on earth did you get it from? Whose is it?"

But instead of answering these questions, Norah only sighed and groaned, but presently said,

"Ellen, if you have got a fan give me one, for this poor little wretch is nearly suffocated with heat."

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Ellen took down from the mantel-piece a spread turkey wing, and handed it to Norah, and while the latter was fanning the child, Ellen kneeled down by it to take a nearer view.

"Poor little thing, how pale it is, mother? Is it sick?—*whose is it?*"

"She is half famished, Ellen! Do call Hag, and tell her to bring some new milk for her."

"It is a girl, then—*whose child is it, mother?*

"Do go and do as I ask you, Ellen, and then I will tell you."

"Mother! Abishag has just this moment taken the pail and gone to milk Blossom; I can see her return from here, and when she comes I will tell you."

And now for the first time—the large shawl having fallen—Ellen noticed the rags of her mother-in-law's attire.

"Yes! you may look, Ellen! but I have not slept under a roof for four months!"

"Mother!"

"It is true, Ellen! But it has not killed me, as you see!

"*Nothing* can kill me—that is the worst of it! I cannot catch cold—I cannot starve—I cannot weary myself to death. Ah! Ellen, a deathless grief is a deathless life!"

"Mother!"

"And suicide is the only sin for which there is no repentance, and no pardon!"

"Mother! Mother! you look wild and weary! Give me the child! Tea is almost ready, a cup of it will restore you. Go, lie down until it is ready, mother, and when you have rested, and have drank it, I will bring you warm water, and a fresh suit of night clothes, and then you can go to bed and sleep comfortably, and to-morrow you will be better."

"*Comfortably! Better!*" exclaimed the wretched woman, with a horrid laugh, which waked up little Maud, who started out of her heavy sleep with a cry of terror.

Poor babe. She had now been thirty-six hours in the hands of her captor, and already want, exposure, fatigue, improper food, and occasional fits of grief and terror, and longing for

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loving, familiar forms and faces, had made the baby ill, and physical pain was added to all her other sufferings. And now she awoke again and looked around with an anxious, searching look—but no mother or nurse, or loving auntie appeared there to make her little, perplexed, and troubled heart leap for joy—all was strange and dreary. And she gazed at Ellen's gentle, pitying face as if half expecting to recognize in hers a familiar countenance, but a minute served to disappoint the little one in this, and she turned away with piteous, trembling lips, and bright tears standing on her cheeks. Ellen held out her arms, and spoke gently and coaxingly to her. And the little one looked up to her face again with an inquiring, sorrowful, confidential smile, and murmured,

"Minnie!"

"Poor little thing! Yes, she *shall* go to her Minnie—come along!" said Ellen.

And in an instant the child almost leaped into those extended arms. And Ellen pressed her to her bosom, and softly caressed her. But—

"Minnie! *now* Minnie!" persisted the child, pulling at Ellen as if to pull her along somewhere.

Ellen still caressed and coaxed, and tried to soothe the child, but little Maud began to sob in piteous tones,

"Minnie! Minnie!"

At last a bright thought struck Ellen. She went to her nursing chair and sat down in it, and bared her bosom, and placed little Maud to her breast. But this action seemed to wake a host of tender, loving memories in the infant's heart, for with both hands she pushed away the offered breast, and burst into a wild passion of tears, crying,

"Minnie! Minnie! *my* Minnie!"

Ellen turned very pale with pity. She sought in every way to comfort the child, without success, for "Minnie! Minnie! *my* Minnie," was still her piteous wail. At last Ellen walked rapidly up to where Norah still sat, and—

"Who *is* her mother? Has she *got* one? *Where* is she?

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What *can* we do for her? for, indeed, her cries almost break my heart!" she asked.

"Her mother and father are both dead. They died with the fever that broke out on the ship in which they sailed from Ireland. They left no other children, only this baby, and I took it to save it from the poor-house," said Norah.

And as Ellen still looked astonished and wondering, she added, impatiently,

"I wa'n't going to let my nephew's child go to the poor-house! You would not expect me to do such a thing, would you?"

"No, surely not. Hush, hush, my darling baby! You shall go to your Minnie by-and-bye, (when you go to heaven)."

"Well! George Grove was my nephew. You have heard me talk about George Grove?"

"Yes. No. I don't know!"

"Oh, yes you have! You forget! Well, George Grove, poor fellow, with his wife and child were coming over to this country, and they took the fever and died, and when the ship got to A——, I took the child to keep it off the parish, as I said. And another time I will tell you more about it. I am too tired now. And there comes the old woman with the milk," said Norah, in a wearied tone.

And Ellen, who, of all human beings, was the most simple and credulous, and the least suspicious, took the babe with her, and went for the fresh milk. And Norah, who felt no remorse for the theft of the child, experienced a pang of wounded pride in feeling herself forced to invent a falsehood to conceal that theft.

Days passed, during which little Maud, infant like, at intervals suffered herself to be amused, and then remembered and moaned for her mother. But at the end of the week the vision had faded in the baby's memory, and in another week, Ellen had won her love entirely to herself. And from this time the child's vigorous organization rebounded into fine health. The time drew near when Ellen was to leave her sylvan home. Ellen spoke of it to her mother-in-law. But Norah was totally passive and indifferent—she seemed to have lost all care for all

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things in life. Her looks and manners gave Ellen great anxiety. The wretched woman would sometimes sit for the whole day without speaking or eating, and when night came, instead of going to bed, she would wander forth into the forest, and be absent till morning. And Ellen at last noticed, with startling terror, that these eccentric habits always recurred upon the change of the moon, increasing in erraticism towards its full, and abating with its wane. And the poor young widow could no longer doubt that her wretched mother was a lunatic. She was a harmless one as yet, but as her malady increased, Ellen feared very much what might be its consequences to herself and others, especially as there was no one to look after and take care of her except Ellen's self and old Abishag. The latter was charged with the duty of following the poor distraught one in all her wanderings through the forest. And at such times, when, perhaps, for several successive nights, poor old Hag had lost her sleep in this severe service, her complaints and expostulations would be neither few nor short, in fact they would be both unmeasured and unsparing. And when, after a weary pursuit of several hours, on some moonlight night, she would come up with her mistress, sitting in the depths of the forest, she would stand before her holding her sides, and puffing and blowing, and haranguing after the following fashion:

"Now, look here, ole Mist', what *does* yer think o' yerse'f, for a 'spectable ole 'oman, 'o yer ages—let alone a 'sponsible member 'o deciety—to be a gwine on at dis yer rate? A tramper-prowlin' t'rough the big-woods all the hours o' the night, like a wagabone runaway nigger, as is no 'spect for herse'f? 'Deed, Lord *knows* is I 'shamed o' yer, ole Mist'. Purty thing, at my ven'able time o' life, to catch myse'f vanderbowsin' t'rough the woods, like a wagrant, all hours o' the night! 'Deed, I'se 'fraid if things gwine on in this way much longer, people take me up for a dissipated correcter!" Then in a soft, wheedling tone—

"Come, ole Mist'—come, chile, come—come, honey, come home—that's a good lady! come home. 'Sider how we-dem ain't had a wink o' sleep these three blessed nights, all along o'

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trampin' up an' down the country arter *you*. 'Deed, Lord *knows* does I, 'spect we-dem be 'rested on 'spicion o' wagabone. Come, ole Mist', take a 'flection on to it, that's a good soul! 'Sider how it's gwine on to twelve o'clock, an' me got to git up yearly to-morrow mornin', to milk de cows an' git breakfast." Then, with rising wrath—

"Look yer, ole Mist'! I'm gittin' tired off'n this yer! You stop bein' of a baby, now, an' git up, an' come along home! Do you hear me, I tell you, ole Mist'? *I* shill go 'way an' leave you, caze I ain't a-gwine to be stayin' out yer in de woods, catchin' my death o' cold, all along o' yer rotten, infunnelly nonsense! Come along home!" &c., &c., &c.

But Abishag might as well have talked to a rock, for any impression that she made. And many were the nights that poor old Hag spent walking after and watching her lunatic mistress.

Ellen deferred her departure for still another quarter, upon account of the autumn fevers that prevailed in the city, and to which she shrank from exposing the children. This second delay brought the first of November, by which day all was arranged for the removal of the little family. Her landlord kindly assisted her in settling up her business in the neighborhood, and transporting her furniture to the city. And the good priest—"good shepherd of the sheep," indeed—engaged a small, cheap house in town, for the poor widow and her children, and came down into the country to attend them thither.

By the middle of November they were settled in their humble new home. Abishag had insisted on coming to town with the young family, that were as dear to her as if they had been her own children, and indeed it would have been very difficult for Ellen to dispense with her services.

Ellen's only friend in the city was Father Goodrich, and it was through his kind offices that she obtained as much needle-work as she could possibly do. And she worked steadily, from the earliest dawn of day, till twelve or one o'clock at night, while old Abishag took care of the house, the children and the lunatic grandmother. But alas! alas! what could one frail pair of

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woman's hands do towards supporting a family of six, when house-rent, and fuel, and lights, and food, and clothing were to be purchased for them all? Ellen worked very hard, but without making her family comfortable, without doing more than just keeping their souls and bodies together.

Father Goodrich entreated her to send the old woman to a lunatic hospital, and place her children in the orphan asylum. But Ellen would shake her head—

"*His* mother and children, Father? No, Father, not while I have hands to work for them."

Nor would Ellen accept charity, even from the venerable hands of her confessor.

"No, Father, no! You may think it pride, but it is not—or at least, Father, such a pride seems to me a minor virtue, a safeguard." So would Ellen reply to the expostulations of the aged priest.

And toil and privation are long in doing their work, and so *three* years of wretched penury passed away before Ellen's health and strength utterly failed. It was the year that the great pestilence broke out in the city. And that autumn found Ellen herself in the infirmary, her children in the orphan asylum, her mother-in-law in the lunatic hospital, and poor old Hag in the alms house.

We must now return to the Governor's family.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### THE BEREAVED MOTHER.

If life be heavy on your hands,
Are there no beggars at your gate,
Nor any poor about your lands?
Oh! teach the orphan boy to read,
Or, teach the orphan girl to sew;
Pray Heaven for a human heart,
And let your selfish sorrow go.—*Tennyson.*

AUGUSTA arose at last from her bed of illness—arose the mere shadow of the beauteous woman she had been before. It was a most sorrowful convalescence. As she sat in her easy-chair, or moved languidly about the house, everything, every hour in the day, every minute in the hour, brought up the image of her lost babe, and added fresh poignancy to her sharp sorrow. And then came dreams of the lost child. She dreamed of her almost every night—of her being found—of her being restored to her in some miraculous manner; and again—most strange introversion! she dreamed that her *loss* was but a dream, and that she had wakened up to clasp her living, loving child! And oh! the waking from such real dreams as those was like death! It was again to suffer all the sharp anguish of a new bereavement! And so were dreams and realities confused in her brain, that it was feared that in the mental anarchy, her reason would be dethroned.

For a long time even after she had arisen from her bed, she had not noticed her dress or that of her household; but one day, when an unusually gay colored autumn dressing-gown was brought to her, she suddenly shut her eyes, and turned away, and afterwards asked for black—black—nothing would suit her but black; she would henceforth wear nothing but black—nor would she suffer any member of her family to approach her, who was not clothed in black; and her whole household was clothed in mourning. Poor mother! she would have clothed



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the whole heavens and earth in mourning, if she could have done so. Her friends and acquaintances would have expostulated with Augusta upon this point—they would have told her that this funeral array would but serve to keep her infant constantly in her mind. "To keep her infant constantly in her mind!" As if the image of "sweet Maud" was ever absent for a moment! But, Augusta was too unnerved to argue, or she would have said that these mournful shades suited her soul's sorrow—and, moreover, it was her will that every honor should be paid to the memory of little Maud that would be accorded to the memory of a great man or beautiful woman, gone in his or her prime. The poor sorrow-crushed mother did not say this—she did not even *think* it—she only *felt* it, and acted on the vague but strong feeling. And Daniel Hunter would not suffer her to be annoyed by any contradiction. Be it so, he said. Let the whole household be clothed in mourning; let the whole house be closed to the outer world if she wished it—if it would in the least degree serve to soothe that shattered nervous system. He even saw that her wishes in that respect were executed. And to the objections of his family, he replied that he would well know when the proper time came to change all this. For the present, his suffering wife must not be permitted to feel the least additional disturbance or irritation—that her frail and tottering life and reason must be most tenderly watched, sustained, and nursed back to firmness and health. He said it—and he crushed the mighty sorrow in his own heart, that he might better support her. The strong will that had once subjugated, now served to shield her from the very least of all outward disturbances, that in her weakened state would have been rude shocks. Even his mother and father, who wished to approach their daughter-in-law with well-meant but injudicious efforts at consolation, had to give way before his will. And of all his sisters, he would permit only Letty to approach her at will. And of her brother, Letty said that he seemed gifted with a sixth sense for the preservation of his wife—and surely the instinct of affection *is* a sixth and higher sense, and certainly Augusta must have per-

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ished, but for the matchless tact and tenderness that watched over her. It was *his* care that subdued all lights, that they should not glare—all noises, that they should not grate upon her weakened and excitable senses. It was his arms that sustained her—his bosom that pillowed her head in every fresh burst of grief—until at last a new feeling was awakened, and she grew to realize how priceless was that love that Heaven had left her still; she grew to realize how painful the self-government he was exercising—how great the sorrow he was subduing for *her* sake; and dawned in her heart at last the feeling that she must conquer *hers* for his sake; and in the midst of her outburst of grief she took his hands and kissed them with as much of fervent honor as of love. Sorrow drew those two hearts nearer, if possible, together. The Holy Bible became their book of books—and they studied together its sacred pages, drawing large draughts of consolation from its divine fountains; their Christianity, that had been a mere intellectual assent to the Scriptural code of morals, became spiritualized—their very benevolence and philanthrophy, that had been a mere moral inspiration, became a sympathetic emotion; in a word, the divine discipline of sorrow had turned the hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Yes—they confessed to each other that they had made too much, and suffered others to make too much of an idol of their beloved child; that they must have finally ruined her moral nature by worshiping her very faults because they were *hers*.

During all this time Daniel Hunter was unremitting in his attention to the affairs of the State—and those who saw him, pale and haggard with stifled grief, said,

"The Governor works too hard! only see with what painful, anxious interest he engages in the business of the commonwealth."

They could not imagine—these people who had no children, or who had a number of children—the long-continued wasting, the sorrow, the "aching void," left by the loss of this little one.

By very gradual degrees Augusta admitted her family connections and friends to see her. Of all the family, old Daniel

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seemed the most considerate and tender, yet even he, seeing her darkened windows, and mourning robes, and the dreadful pallor of her face, expostulated mildly, saying,

"Ah, Augusta, Augusta, this is all a protest, a reproach to Heaven!"

"Ah, no! It is not! It is not! Heaven forbid! It is only consonant to my feelings, father."

"And is thy heart so dark, so gloomy and so hopeless as this, Augusta? And does thee believe thy Bible?"

"Sir, father, if she had been removed from me in any other way! But this—but this!"

"Without sickness—without pain—without suffering of any sort—to be snatched at once from sweet, healthful, happy sleep to Heaven! Was that an ill death, Augusta?"

But Augusta was weeping bitterly, and could not reply.

"Does thee believe thy Bible, Augusta? Does thee believe in God, and Heaven, and immortality? Does thee believe that 'as such' as thy child, is 'the kingdom of Heaven?' I ask, does thee believe this with thy heart? or does thee only confess it with thy lips? I tell thee, Augusta, that Scripture truth, Christian revelations, in order to do us good, must not only be confessed with the lips, but believed in the heart, realized, familiarized, acted upon, lived out!"

"Oh! I know, I know," sighed Augusta, "but it takes a long time and much grace to do this, my father. Be patient with me, as Heaven is, and I will try!"

Thus time wore on. The term of Daniel Hunter's administration drew to a close. He had not increased in popularity—he could not have done so—he who was the people's demigod from the first; but his reign over hearts and minds was more secure and permanent than before. He was called by popular acclamation to become a candidate for re-election. But this honor he firmly and finally declined. He was about to undertake a voyage to Europe, for the purpose of spending a year or two in travelling over the eastern continent. The fact was, that to Augusta's first violent sorrow had succeeded a melancholy so

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deep and settled as to resist all the efforts of affection, and all the influences of religion—and her physicians, wearied out even perhaps with a case that was beyond their ken, had recommended total change of scene and occupation. And Daniel Hunter had determined upon spending two years in travelling through Europe and the accessible parts of Asia and Africa. Therefore he made everything ready for his voyage, and after seeing his successor installed in office, in the spring of the year, with Augusta, Letty, and one maid and man servant, sailed from New York for the east. It was all very well: they spent some time profitably, gained some knowledge and experience not otherwise to be obtained, saw the old cities of the old world, with their monuments of antiquity and *chefs d'œuvre* of art: that was all; when did ever travel, change of scene, excitement, cure that sorrow which religion had only soothed? No, all these new scenes, new objects of interest, new emotions, and thoughts, and ideas, only played upon the surface of their grief, did not get beneath it to expel it.

They returned home at the end of eighteen months, to meet a great political party, clamorous for Daniel Hunter's presence and re-election. The affairs of the State had not gone well by any means, in the interval filled by his successor, who was about to become also his predecessor. And the people were importunate and vociferous for the election of the only man to whom they could now with perfect confidence entrust the reins of government. His return at this moment was an ovation. Never before had the welkin so rang with the name of Daniel Hunter. And Daniel Hunter, roused from his temporary apathy, like the war-horse from his repose, responded to the clarion-call of the people, and threw himself with all his force into the melee of political warfare. And so Augusta lost him. Not but that they lived together in the greatest harmony at Daniel Hunter's town house. But that the man in whose titan brain was embarked the destinies of an endangered commonwealth, had no time now to stop to wipe away a woman's tears, or sympathize with her morbid sorrows. And he was ever hurrying to and fro, or



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closeted in council with grave politicians, or shut up writing letters and dispatches, or starting upon sudden distant journeys; and the most he could find time to do for the lonely Augusta, was to press her hand, or kiss her forehead at parting, and say, hastily, "I wish you had some absorbing object of occupation, my love. You need such an interest in life very much," or something of the sort. Yet the father had by no means forgotten his only child—his one lone and lost baby. No! many a pensive hour was given to the memory of "sweet Maud." Many an hour when being hurried along in some steam-car, from the abstraction of his mind, he might have been supposed to be deep in some political problem, when his mind was only filled with the image of a laughing infant—so much for the constant integrity of human greatness. His tender memory of little Maud betrayed itself in his daily gentle attentions to other children for her sake. Daniel Hunter, the man and leader of the people—by virtue of the great brain and heart, master of millions of minds—he whom multitudes assembled to see and hail—would take into his own arms the poorest infant of the humblest mother, lest in her unassisted entrance or exit from the cars, the little one should be roughly handled. Yes, the image of "sweet Maud" reposed in his great heart, as in some colossal mausoleum.

When, on some sudden arrival at home, he would chance to surprise his wife giving way to one of her fits of weeping, he would say,

"Enough, and more than enough of this, Augusta! Such indulgence of sorrow is a sin against Heaven and earth. It is selfish and heartless to the last degree. You have ample time and ample means; go forth among the poor and sick and sinful and suffering—visit the dwellings of penury, the hospitals, the asylums, the prisons—feed the starving, clothe the ragged, nurse the sick, visit the prisoner, reclaim the guilty. Go! take my mother with you, and go, an angel of mercy, as Heaven intended you to be, for God has given you an angel's face and voice. Go, a messenger of redemption and hope, even to the most abandoned

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of your fallen sisters, and see what you can do for them—for God! Have you a charge to keep or not? Were your ample means and leisure—were your angel's face and voice, your powers of intelligence, of sympathy, of eloquence and persuasion—your marvellous spell over hearts, given for your own use and enjoyment only, or for the good of humanity, the glory of God?"

Thus would he speak to her, and with great effect. It was impossible to resist the eloquence of truth and love. She did arise and go forth among the haunts of poverty, disease, sin, and every phase of human misery; and in the heavenly mission she found at last, *at last*, the solace for her sorrow. In the *active duties* of domestic, social and Christian life, is found the true "balm of Gilead."

In the meantime, Daniel Hunter was re-elected by an almost unanimous vote. And in due course of time the second inauguration came off with all the "pomp, pride and circumstance" of the first solemnity. And once more the Governor's family were re-established in the executive mansion. But the rounds of State dinners, receptions, etc.,—the exacting duties of her position—were not allowed to withdraw Augusta entirely from the better beloved work of her Divine Master, in which she had engaged with all the constitutional fervor and devotion of her nature. And, indeed, the summer that followed Daniel Hunter's re-election was a season when the heaviest claims were made upon the benevolence and humanity of the rich and powerful. The fearful pestilence was striding through their midst, and hundreds fell before its withering breath. It first victims were, as usual, among the very poor—and so rapid was its progress, that in three weeks after its first appearance, the hospitals and infirmaries were filled. Nearly all who were able to go, fled the doomed city. Few remained besides those moral heroes, the physicians, and those Christian martyrs, the sisters of charity. The senior members of Daniel Hunter's family had fled in dismay to Howlet Hall. But the Governor would not desert his post of duty. And his faithful wife would not either forsake

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him in his danger, or her suffering poor in their extremity. She, too, remained, putting herself and hers under the protection of God.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE ANGEL OF THE PESTILENCE.

'Tis no delusion—when you see her face,
Her pale face smiling on you suddenly,
And hear her voice, all one melodious tone,
Charming away despair—then will you say
"The angel this of whom the old man spake."
Some think she bears a charm against the Pest,
And they are not deceived—a charm she hath,
Yet hidden not in ring or amulet,
But in the quiet of her fearless soul.—*Wilson.*

THE pestilence was at its very height. The city was emptied of half its population. The public works were arrested. Private business was stopped. Not only the theatres and concert-rooms, but the very schools and churches were closed. Death and his consort, Terror, reigned. Only the drug-stores, the hospitals, asylums and infirmaries remained in full and active operation—only the heroic medical faculty, the devoted sisters of charity, and a few benevolent gentlemen and clergymen, continued at their posts in the plague-stricken city. The physicians of the town were most zealous in the performance of their duty—scarcely taking time to return home to eat or sleep. And in almost every gentleman's parlor there was set out a side-table with refreshments, that the harassed doctors might run in and snatch a hasty morsel wherever it was most convenient. Yet with all the zeal of the medical faculty, there was more work than they could personally attend to. And therefore, many private unprofessional gentlemen were supplied with pockets of medicine and written directions, so as to be prepared for the emergencies certain to occur in their respective neighborhoods.

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And some good was done, and some lives saved by these unprofessional physicians.

Among the most devoted to the sufferers, were Daniel Hunter and Augusta. They went everywhere—into the most squalid alleys of the city—into the most crowded wards of the hospitals. They were without fear—nor indeed for them was there any danger—their physical organization, their strong and steady nerves, their fearless souls, effectually repelled the influence of contagion. And Daniel Hunter impressed upon Augusta's heart the inspiring promises of the Bible:—

"Whoso dwelleth under the defence of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

"Thou shalt not be afraid for any terror by night, nor for the arrow that flieth by day."

"For the pestilence that walketh in darkness, nor for the sickness that destroyeth in the noonday."

"A thousand shall fall beside thee, and ten thousand at thy right hand, yet it shall not come nigh thee."

"For He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways."

And in the midst of the most appalling scenes of the pest-house these words recurred to her with power of preservation. Frequently in these missions of mercy, their respective duties would separate them for a whole day, but words of mutual encouragement would mingle with their farewell. And alone or together, prayers, invocations, and blessings attended them wherever they went. Daniel Hunter's walks lay principally among the squalid abodes of penury and disease, in the neglected and forgotten alleys and back streets of the plague-stricken city. And many were the lives he rescued from death, less of the pestilence than of filth, vice, and want. Augusta was the missionary of the hospitals, asylums, and infirmaries. And her daily visit was expected with no less anxiety than those of the attendant physicians. And many a restless, tossing, half-delirious sufferer grew calm and still when the black-veiled form of the gentle lady entered. And many a countenance, writhing and distorted with

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pain and anguish, grew serene, and smiled as her beautiful pale face, still shaded by the drooping black ringlets, bent over them.

"Who are you, lady?" asked a feverish, convalescent patient, whose head she was cooling. "What church do you belong to, and who is your pastor? For it must be the true church that sends forth such members. Say, lady?"

"I belong to the universal church of Christ, and my husband is my only spiritual director."

"And who is he, gentle lady?"

"Daniel Hunter," replied Augusta, with a warm flush of deep joy mantling her cheeks. She never named his name to new ears, or recalled his image after a transient absence, without this deep welling up of joy—of the perpetual fountain of joy in her heart.

The woman gazed at the speaker in surprise, exclaiming,

"What! *he*, Daniel Hunter, the Governor of M——?"

"Yes," Augusta answered in a low voice, "and he has been here to see you, but it was while you were delirious."

"No wonder the people worship him. Will he come again?"

"To-morrow," said the lady, "he will visit the hospitals again." And so saying, Augusta settled her patient's head upon the pillow, arranged the coverlet over her form, took leave, and passed on to the next.

The fury of the pestilence was already rapidly abating, and people were lifting their panic-stricken heads with something like a feeling of security, and the terrified fugitives from the city were thinking of returning, when one day, about this time, Daniel Hunter and Augusta went together to visit the infirmary attached to the alms-house. In passing through the women's convalescent ward, they noticed a little, fair-haired, blue-eyed child, who was certainly out of place there, yet to whom no one seemed to pay the least attention. The little one was sitting flat upon the floor, and looking around with a half-curious, half-frightened expression of countenance. Augusta stooped and patted the child encouragingly on the head, and inquired of one of the women whose it was. The woman could not inform her—

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she said the child had arrived with a new set of fever patients that morning, and that the intendant had not yet seen her. Augusta was looking at the little one with deep interest—it was a beautiful and interesting child, with a very fair complexion, delicate features, dark-blue eyes, and clusters of pale, golden hair curling around a broad, fair forehead, and its innocent gaze was raised with full confidence to the lady's pale, sweet face. Augusta's eyes were suffused with gentle tears.

"She reminds me, somehow, of little Maud," she said.

"Yes," replied Daniel Hunter, looking tenderly and thoughtfully at the child. "She is about the age our sweet Maud would have been had she lived, and she has also her complexion, but Maud's features were cast in a nobler mould than this little one's."

"Yes, but she has the same colored hair and eyes and complexion, and I hate to see her here in the poor-house," said Augusta, lingering, still lingering, and looking back as they passed the fair child. They went their rounds, spending two or three hours in going from ward to ward visiting the patients, advising with nurses and consulting physicians. And on their return they passed once more through the convalescent ward, where the beautiful child still remained. A sister of charity, who was the daily attendant of this ward, approached to welcome and speak with Mrs. Hunter. When they had exchanged their greetings—

"Can you tell me, Sister Martha, who is this little child?" inquired Augusta.

"Ah! it is a very sorrowful case, madam. A whole family brought in this morning apparently dying of the pestilence—this little one the only member left unstricken."

"A whole family! Sweet Heaven! I had hoped to hear of no more such cases."

"A whole family, madam, a wretched, starving family, found abandoned in the last stage of the fever, and brought here by the commissioners this morning."

"Oh, Heaven! How many of them were there, then?" inquired Daniel Hunter.

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"Five in all, sir, a woman with three children and an old colored nurse."

"And what is their present state?"

"The sick woman and the two children, sir, are already removed to the dead ward—the old negress is recovering—this child, as you see, has not been stricken yet."

"And what is the name of this wretched family?"

"O'Leary, sir! It is altogether the greatest case of suffering that has come under my knowledge during the reign of the fever—this poor woman was a widow, sir, the widow of that O'Leary that was executed."

A stifled shriek from Augusta arrested Sister Martha's speech. Augusta had started and shuddered at the first breathing of the name, and now she exclaimed,

"Ellen O'Leary! Oh, God! Oh, don't! don't! don't say it was Ellen O'Leary!"

"That was the poor young woman's name, Mrs. Hunter. You knew her?"

"She was an old acquaintance! Just God! how terrible are the trials and vicissitudes of life! Where is Ellen and her children? Are they still living? Let me go to them at once," said Augusta, in great agitation.

But Daniel Hunter silently drew her arm in his, and Sister Martha answered,

"Not for the world, madam, must you go to them. They are already removed to the dead ward."

"But it is cruel, it is very wrong, and I always said so, to carry the dying to the dead ward."

"Madam, it is necessary for the welfare of the living, and it does no harm to the dying. When they have got to that state, madam, their condition is so offensive, so highly contagious, that they spread death all around them, and their raving delirium is also very fatal to the other patients, and as far as they themselves are concerned, madam, they are past knowing *where* they are taken."

"But are you never mistaken, then? Does it never happen that a sufferer carried there to die recovers?"

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"Scarce once in fifty times, madam."

"Good Heaven! And when one recollects that there may have been premature interments also?"

"I trust that there has been none, Mrs. Hunter. The precautions taken are very great.'

All this time Augusta had been wiping away her streaming tears, and now she slipped her arms out of her husband's clasp, and said,

"Please to lead the way, Sister Martha—I must go see Ellen, wherever she is."

But Daniel Hunter gently repossessed himself of her hand, and firmly held it, while the sister said,

"You know it cannot be permitted, Mrs. Hunter. Even I am not suffered to enter there. So fatal, so deadly is the atmosphere of the dead ward, that by a regulation of the commissioners no one is permitted to enter it except those who have had the fever, and who engage to confine themselves exclusively to that department. All the nurses and attendants of that ward are selected from those who have had the fever. Be patient, dear madam, for you could do your friend no good if you were allowed to go. She is long past all human help, if she be not already in eternity."

Augusta dropped her head on her husband's shoulder and wept aloud.

Daniel Hunter attempted no consolation beyond pressing the hand he still held captive.

But Augusta felt her dress softly clasped by infant arms, and raising her head from its resting place and looking down, she saw the little child half embracing her, and lifting its sweet sympathetic face to hers. She dried her tears, and placed her hand in benediction on the little bright head.

"Poor little one," she said, "sweet little one—with all her poverty and suffering, she has known nothing but love—for see how sympathetic and how fearless she is—that also reminds me of our Maud."

Daniel Hunter was looking down upon the child also.

"What will be done with this orphan, Sister Martha?" he asked.



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"She will remain at the alms house until she is old enough to be bound out, like other pauper children, I suppose, sir," answered the sister, sadly.

Daniel Hunter and Augusta were both contemplating the child with deep interest. On hearing this reply, both raised their eyes and their earnest, questioning glances met—the identical thought was in the minds of both—both spoke at once.

"She is fatherless," said Daniel Hunter.

"She is motherless," said Augusta.

"And we are childless," concluded both together.

They looked again in each other's faces. Daniel Hunter's countenance was grave and thoughtful. Augusta's heart was palpitating anxiously, her color came and went. The child's gentle hands still clasped her dress, while she looked up with innocent, unconscious eyes to her face.

"Will you take her, Augusta?" inquired Daniel Hunter.

"Take her! May I? Oh! Mr. Hunter!" exclaimed the lady, grasping the hand that still held hers, and looking anxiously, entreatingly in his face, and hanging with hope and fear upon his next words.

They came very sweetly through gravely smiling lips.

"Most certainly, Augusta, if it will add to your happiness."

"I may take her! Can you be in earnest? Oh! thank you, Mr. Hunter! Oh, yes! I will take her, indeed, poor orphan!" said Augusta, stooping at once, and lifting the child to her bosom.

"I will speak to the intendant and commissioners upon the subject, Augusta, and in the meantime you had better leave the child in the care of good Sister Martha, until you can have whatever is proper prepared for her."

"Yes, but see how she hugs me," said Augusta, unwillingly relinquishing her child to the sister, and promising to come back in her carriage to take her away in the afternoon.

They returned home. And Augusta would have been happier than she had been for a long time, but that her heart unjustly smote her for the adoption of the orphan, as if it had been an infidelity to the memory of sweet Maud. But she soon reasoned

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herself out of this irrational and inhuman feeling, and gave herself up to the anticipated pleasure of cherishing and loving the motherless infant.

And in the afternoon she went and brought the child home.

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For some days previous to their last visit to the hospitals, Daniel Hunter and Augusta had been preparing to retire for a season to their country seat, Howlet Hall. The rapid abatement of the pestilence had discharged them from the duty of remaining to watch over the welfare of the poor, the sick, and the suffering; and the exhausted state of Augusta's health and strength peremptorily demanded a change of air, and a temporary repose in the country. They were now only waiting for the pestilence to be pronounced extinct in order to leave town with easy minds. It was, therefore, the second morning after their last visit to the infirmary, that Daniel Hunter entered his wife's dressing-room, saying, in cheerful tones,

"Well, dear! I think the pestilence may be pronounced dead amongst us at last. You are aware, of course, that for a week past no new case of fever has occurred in the city, or in any hospital, except that of the infirmary connected with the alms house, which we visited the day before yesterday. And of *that* infirmary the medical bulletin reports no new case of pestilence for the last three days. The bulletin of this afternoon is highly favorable and encouraging. It reports, of the three wards of the infirmary, the dead ward *empty;* the sick ward containing but one patient; the convalescent ward but three;—total, but four cases of fever, and all past crisis and recovering. And now my poor dear worn out Augusta, now that the plague may be said to be past, and your toils and duties among the sick over, and everybody is coming back to the city—*now* I may take you to the country to recruit. Are you not glad?"

Augusta smiled, and said that she was; but almost instantly her eyes were suffused with tears, and she murmured,

"'The dead ward empty,' then poor Ellen and her babes are dead and buried. Oh! what a death! what a burial! Oh! if

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we could only have seen her respectably interred—if we could only have paid that last poor attention to her."

"It could not have been, Augusta. You know that the sanitary regulations of the infirmary forbid that. The dead of the pestilence are buried in the simplest manner possible, and the chaplain reads the burial service over them. And this simple promptitude is wise and right. A corpse, you know, if it were that of saint or hero, is *but* a corpse—a cast-off garment, and if infected, must not be permitted to spread plague and death among the living and the healthy. The dead is beyond your care, Augusta, think only of the living. How is the orphan—your little adopted child?"

On the cushion, at the lady's feet, sat the little one asleep, with its head upon her lap, its golden-hued curls shining upon her black dress, its golden-hued eyelashes and rosy cheeks spangled with tear-drops, as a blooming rose with morning dew. It had wept itself to sleep.

"How is the poor orphan?" repeated Daniel Hunter, drawing a chair and sitting down, and looking with interest at the child.

"Poor thing! she grieves for her mother—she turns away from everything I offer her, and asks for her mother. A child of four years of age does not so soon forget. Poor little one! She will never accept *me* as her mother—and—well as I am disposed to love her, I shall never be able to receive her as my child. It seems to me that to do so would be to wrong the memory of my dearest little Maud.

"The spirit of evil suggested that selfish thought—away with it, Augusta."

"I think so, too, and I resist the inhuman feeling. And, in truth, this is a lovely child, though not so lovely as sweet Maud—for, remember, though they have *almost* the same colored skin, and hair, and eyes, yet Maud's golden hair was of a richer, warmer hue, and her eyes a deeper blue, and eyebrows and eyelashes much darker. *This* child will *always* be a blonde, while Maud would have grown up a fair brunette. Oh! *she* was beau-

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tiful, *perfectly* beautiful, *too* beautiful for this earth, and much too lovely," exclaimed Augusta, as a rush of memory and a flood of tears came over her.

Daniel Hunter looked grave, and arose and walked up and down the floor. Augusta, after her burst of weeping, also got up and lifted the sleeping form of her adopted child and laid her on the bed. Daniel Hunter, with a wish to divert her thoughts, requested her to give orders relative to the final preparations for their journey. And then Augusta left the room for the purpose.

At an early hour the next morning they left the city for Howlet Hall, and left it under a wrong impression.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE INMATE OF THE DEAD WARD.

> With caution judge of probabilities,
> Things deemed unlikely—e'en impossible—
> Experience often shows us to be true.—*Shakspeare.*

It is dangerous to take anything for granted. Augusta had received several high probabilities as truths. In the first place she had not considered it possible for the sister of charity to err in the smallest particular of her account of the O'Leary family. And yet the sister had mistaken in supposing that the children of Ellen O'Leary had been conveyed to the dead ward. It is very true that Ellen had been taken to that place, and that in regard to the children, such had been the first intention of the overseers, but their purpose had been changed upon further observation of the little patients, and they had been placed in the sick ward, when their fever soon took a favorable turn.

And in the second place, when hearing the report of the medical bulletin that the dead ward was empty, Augusta had erred in coming to the very natural conclusion that each one who had been taken thither to die *was* dead and buried—had left the dead



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ward only for the grave. It is true that all the occupants of the dead ward, save one, *had* died, and was buried; but Ellen O'Leary was that one. It is also true that she lay many hours as one dead, but she revived from that coma, and gave signs of returning life and consciousness; and when her nurse knew that the dread crisis was past, and that she would live, she was conveyed into the sick ward.

But the hurried departure of Daniel Hunter and his family prevented their discovering their mistake.

And now Ellen, with her children, was fast recovering. One of the first questions she asked on reaching the sick ward, and being laid upon the fresh, sweet bed, was,

"Where are my children?"

"They are *here*," replied the nurse, "they have had the fever, but are now out of danger. But you must not talk."

Ellen, ever docile, resigned herself to slumber. But the next morning, her first inquiry was,

"How are my children? Can I not see them?"

"They are getting well—they have been removed this morning to the ward of the convalescents, where you may be carried in a few days, if you are patient and do not retard your recovery by restlessness," replied the physician, who was in attendance.

A few days after this, Ellen was well enough to be removed from the sick to the convalescent ward. Here she found two of the children running about and amusing themselves, only very gently and quietly, as if the hushed air of the place subdued them. But where was the third? Here was her boy, Willie—and here the orphan child, Sylvia Grove; but where—oh! where was her youngest born, her darling child, Honoria? Dead, perhaps! and they would not tell her! The pang that seized her heart at the thought, almost threw her back into illness; it was only for an instant, and she called Sister Martha—whose hour of attendance it happened to be—and in faltering tones, asked for her youngest child; adding, as she bent eagerly forward and fixed her pleading eyes upon the Sister's face,

"Tell me! oh, tell me at once—do not keep me in suspense,

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even if she is dead; I have suffered so much, that I could bear even that."

But Ellen's throbbing throat and quivering lips and pale face contradicted her words, and the sister hastened to say,

"She is not dead, poor dear, no, by no means—she is very well, she has not even been sick."

With a deep sigh of relief, Ellen sank back in her chair, inquiring,

"Where is she?"

"Where you can get her again, if you wish her, my dear—though I would advise you to let her remain where she is."

"Where?"

"A wealthy and most estimable lady of the highest rank, who has no children of her own, has taken her away, with the intention of adopting her, my dear."

"Without my leave!" exclaimed Ellen; all the mother's instinct of possession flashing from her eyes.

"My dear, you can get her again, if you want her—of course you can. When the lady took her from this place, you were—"

The sister suddenly paused—she could not tell Ellen that at the moment the child was taken away, she was left in the ward of death.

"Well?" asked the latter.

"You were very low—we—the—lady—it was very kind in her to wish to take the orphan, you know."

"You all thought that I was dying, and she wished to adopt the destitute child. Yes, it was very kind! Oh! it was very kind," said Ellen, deeply moved.

"Ah! if you knew *how* kind, how good, how saintly she is—that blessed lady! She preferred to remain in town during all the rage of the pestilence, risking her precious life, and devoting her time, money, and personal attentions to the sufferers; the saint! the blessed saint!"

"I wonder why she did not take one of the other children—especially, why she did not take Sylvia Grove, who is *really* an orphan, and no child of mine; now Sylvia would have suited her

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purpose exactly," said Ellen, passing her fingers thoughtfully through her hair, and still inspired with the mother's instinct of possession, rather than by the recollections of the many great advantages that might accrue by this adoption to her own child. "Yes," she added; "Sylvia, with no mother to want her back again, and no relatives to claim her, would have been just the child for the childless lady. Do you know why she took Honoria instead of Sylvia, Sister?"

"My dear, the two children were ill as yourself then—only Honoria was well; besides, how could she have known that one of the three children was an orphan, when we did not know it ourselves?"

"Ah! true—I am all in the dark about what happened after I was taken ill. But, Sister, who is the lady that wishes to adopt my child? You told me she was of high rank. What is her name?"

"Mrs. Daniel Hunter."

"Mrs. Daniel Hunter!"

"Yes—the Governor's wife."

"Mrs. Daniel Hunter!" again exclaimed Ellen; "why *she* is not childless. She has a little girl, or a boy, I forget which—or at least, she *had* one three or four years ago," said Ellen, gravely; her thoughts painfully reverting to the sad time when she first heard of the Governor's child.

"Oh, yes, she *had* a beautiful little girl—a child whose angelic loveliness was the theme of every tongue, but she lost that child so terribly—it was drowned in the Severn—while they were all on a steamboat excursion to the sea, that child dropped overboard and was drowned."

"Good heaven! I never heard that before! Oh, how awful! And to think I envied her once! Oh, I envied her once; and now;" exclaimed Ellen, covering her face with her hands and shuddering. At length she raised up her face and inquired, "Where is Mrs. Hunter now?"

"She left the city several days since for Howlet Hall, the Governor's country seat."

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"And took her Honoria with her?"

"She took the whole family, I understand," said the sister.

The conversation ceased here. The sister's term of attendance was up, and she arose to take leave, and departed, to be replaced by another. Ellen O'Leary, left alone, fell into deep thought, the result of which was a clear appreciation of the immense advantages that must accrue to her child in being adopted by Mrs. Daniel Hunter, and a determination that she would, for the present, leave her in that lady's undisturbed posesssion, reposing on the knowledge that she could, at any time she pleased, reclaim her little daughter. While she was still turning these matters over in her mind, the door opened, and old Abishag, who was now quite well, entered to see her mistress. The old woman came up, cried a little "to think dat we-dem should come to dis yer," she said, but soon recovered herself, said she was glad to see "Miss Ellen" getting along so well, and talked cheerfully of how much better she hoped they would be able to do when they could leave the infirmary. Ellen told her to draw up a chair and sit down, for that she looked still too weak to stand. Old Abishag sat down, and Ellen told her all that had come to her own knowledge about the children, and even sought the advice of the humble, but faithful and conscientious old servant. Aunt Hag earnestly advised her to leave her child in the charge of Mrs. Hunter, and not interfere in any way, not even to send a message, or write a letter, until the child should have remained long enough with Mrs. Hunter to win that lady's heart.

"And *then*, even if you've a mind to take her back, the lady will do a good part by her," concluded the old woman.

Ellen's convalescence was very rapid. The time was approaching when she felt it would be necessary to leave the infirmary, or be placed upon the pauper's list indeed. Autumn was also advancing, and it was expedient to provide her children with some sort of home for the winter, and herself with some occupation by which to supply them with food and clothing. While Ellen was anxiously and painfully cogitating these subjects,

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without being able to see a ray of light in the darkness of her present prospects, she received a message from Father Goodrich, saying that he was coming to see her in a few hours with good news.

"Good news! What good news could come to her?" she asked. She did not believe in it at all. The only possibility she could think of, was, that Mrs. Hunter having heard of her unexpected recovery, had determined to provide for her. And this Ellen thought she could not submit to. It would seem to her like selling little Honoria for a price. No, indeed! if she gave the child, it should be a free gift, for the child's good—she could not receive any assistance that might look like pay, or what was worse—alms.

But while she was still speculating upon this subject, Father Goodrich came in, with a cheerful, open smile, and brisk step. Ellen arose to meet him.

"You need not tell me, dear Father, that they want to give me something for my little girl, for I won't take it—I won't, indeed—I can't take pay, however *well disguised*, for my child, especially from those who——oh! indeed, I do not think I *can* leave her there, anyhow!"

"What are you talking of, Ellen? I bring no message from Mrs. Hunter. No one wants to pay you for your child, that I know of. I come to tell you that you have received a legacy, not a great one, but one sufficient to place you and your children beyond want."

Ellen could only gaze in wonder.

"You know, Ellen, that your relative, Col. Falconer, Willie's god-father, is dead, I presume?"

"Yes, I heard it before I was taken ill. I was very sorry to hear it."

"He was very old—upwards of eighty, Ellen. He died full of years and good works. His death should be no cause of sorrow. Well, you know, he owned much property in various parts of the State?"

"I know."

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"As usual, however, he has left the mass of his estate to his wealthiest relatives; but, Ellen, he has remembered you also. Do you recollect a small farm, called Silver Creek, lying near Howlet Hall, Governor Hunter's seat in A—— county?"

"Yes, I remember."

"Of fifty acres, half in timber, half cleared, with a small dwelling house, and a few out-buildings?"

"Yes, I recollect the place perfectly. It is very much out of repair, and no one has lately lived on it, but the three old negroes who have tilled the soil."

"He has left those negroes in your care, Ellen, and left you the farm, all stocked as it is—no great fortune, Ellen, but sufficient to keep you, and your children, and your servants in the necessaries of life. I have been appointed one of the executors of the will, and only wait until you are well enough to travel to take you thither, if you wish to go, as I suppose of course you do."

Ellen took his hand and pressed it, saying,

"Oh, Father Goodrich, to *you* I owe this piece of good fortune. You are the best friend I ever had. God bless and reward you. Oh! I am very thankful—very thankful! *Thank God!*"

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE OLD HALL OF THE LEGEND.

Not rudely built that ancient hall, whose doors,
Held widely open by the unsparing hand
Of active charity, gives amplest welcome;
Nor unadorned around with graceful trees,
Whose music all the seasons through is heard
Within the cheerful mansion evermore.—*Ellery Channing.*

And Daniel Hunter and his family were domesticated for a short season at his country seat, the far-famed Howlet Hall, situ-

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ated at the bottom of a mountain dell, from its remarkable shape, widely known as the "Cauldron."

The Cauldron, as its name denoted, was a great concave dell, in the form of a mammoth bowl, completely surrounded and closed in by a circle of lofty mountains. The soil was of almost unparalleled richness and fertility, and the vegetation of unrivalled exuberance. There grew trees of fabulous age and size; there bloomed flowers of woundrous beauty and fragrance. The climate, too, was beautiful and equable. It was indeed an enchanted and enchanting spot—an elysium—a garden of Eden—a poet's Arcadia. But prosaic people said there was nothing at all unnatural in the wonderful serenity of the climate, when the high mountains warded off all high winds from the dell—nor in the peerless fertility of the soil, when the drainings from the encircling mountains enriched it—nor could they, therefore, see anything wonderful in the titanic trees or paradisical flowers.

Howlet Hall was an ancient mansion, coeval with the earliest settlement of the country. It was an irregular but massive edifice, constructed of gray sandstone, with many pointed gable ends, and innumerable lattices and windows, whose diamond-shaped sashes and panes of glass were said to have been imported from the "old country." The origin of Howlet Hall was almost legendary in the neighborhood among the simple country people. No one, perhaps, except Daniel Hunter, and the educated few, who interested themselves in the history and antiquities of the county, knew its history; and that history, dear reader, though sufficiently wild, startling, and absorbing in interest, is also *more* than sufficiently long to be recited here. It is enough to inform you that the place was said to be—

> "Under some prodigious ban
> Of excommunication."

Be that as it may, it is certain, that for the last two hundred years, the Hall had changed owners many times. It seemed to be so fatal to its possessors, that no father, who became its purchaser, could pass it to his children. Either bankruptcy dis-

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possessed him, or death left him without immediate heirs. At last, after having passed through many hands, or as the old story tellers by the winter fires said—after having ruined so many families, the malediction resting upon the Hall and its tenants became a received and recognized truth, and not a soul could be found to become its purchaser or lessee. Thus the Hall had remained unoccupied for nearly twenty years. Its patriarchal trees, and ancient eaves and gables, became the home of myriads of swallows, bats and owls. Any tourist or artist in search of the picturesque, who chanced to penetrate beyond the circular barrier of mountains, and descend into the green, luxuriant deep, and find his way to the Hall, and rest upon the seats of its old piazzas, might, if it were evening, and he had the time to spare, count thousands of these night birds, as they would, singly, every second, *flip* from their holes and fly off into the air. Hence grew its name of Howlet Hall. It had been uninhabited, as I said, for nearly twenty years, when Daniel Hunter became its purchaser, under the following circumstances:

One summer, when the strain of official duty was somewhat relaxed, and Mr. Hunter had a few weeks at his disposal for recreation, it had pleased Augusta, who was a great lover of locomotion and the picturesque, instead of going to some fashionable watering place, to take a rural tour through the State. And Daniel Hunter had yielded to her wishes, and they had set out in their traveling carriage on a journey through the mountainous regions of the State. On the second week of their travel they reached the neighborhood of Howlet Hall, and put up at the mountain hamlet of the "Summit." Here Daniel Hunter made his usual inquiry as to whether there were any objects of interest in the neighborhood. In answer to which he was directed to the "Cauldron," and told the legend of Howlet Hall. The next day they appropriated the forenoon to visiting the spot, and examining the old Hall.

They passed the circular barrier of high mountains, through a deep defile, so narrow and winding, as to have its entrance and outlet entirely invisible, showing not the slightest break in the



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rocky circle. Augusta was almost too deeply impressed with the awful gloom and sublimity of the place, and the solitary grandeur of the old Hall. But Daniel Hunter was interested in the most luxurious exuberance of vegetation, proving as it did the unexampled richness and fertility of the soil. And he began to explain how it was the drainings and deposit from the circle of mountains, and the annual decay and return to the earth of the vegetation for so many years, had so greatly enriched the land. And he called her attention to the gushing spring of water in the bottom of the dell, and began to guess how many hundred gallons of water it threw off per minute, and to calculate its force as a water-power. It was almost impossible for Augusta to be interested in this severe utilitarian view of such a scene, and her eyes and thoughts continually wandered to the summits of the encircling mountains, from them to the old Hall. And, seeing this, Daniel Hunter cut short his lecture on agriculture and hydraulics, and gently reproaching her for the want of a "practical" mind, took their way towards the house.

There it stood, with its massive gray walls, its many-peaked gables pointing to the sky, and its numerous odd diamond-paned windows reflecting back the yellow morning sunlight. They had the keys from the innkeeper, and entered the house. If the outside was an irregular building, the inside was a perfect labyrinth of rooms, passages, and staircases, with chambers and closets, and flights of steps turning up unexpectedly in the oddest places. Augusta was curiously interested, and, in the parlors and the bed-rooms, went into a dream about the former occupants.

"And here," she would say to herself, "in this deep bay window of this sitting-room stood some lady's work-stand—in this deep chimney-corner sat some old man's or woman's easy-chair—in the alcove in this adjoining chamber stood a bed, and here between the windows was the place of a dressing bureau, and in that recess might have stood some infant's crib. Where are they now? child and mother, youth and maiden, patriarch and matron, who formed this household—where are they now? Passed away. Scattered and gone, as every household will be in time;

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and desolate gardens and empty chambers and cold hearths are all that remain to speak of their passage."

So mournfully the lady dreamed, while her husband walked about examining the rooms, testing the stability of the walls, trying the strength of the timbers, etc. He found the house very substantial and strong, and in good preservation, likely to last more centuries than it had already passed through. He rejoined his wife, and in drawing her arm within his own, said,

"Well, dear, this 'old mansion' needs only a little superficial rejuvenating to be a very delightful residence. A dozen or two of nails driven here and there—a few hinges—a little plaster, paper, and paint—a few window sashes, and some glass, is all that is required in the way of repairs. And for the rest, new furniture will convert this desolate house into a very comfortable home."

"Yes, for any one that likes to live here, replied the lady, with a slight shrug of her shoulders."

"Would you not like it?"

"For a place to visit and dream about sometimes—*yes*. But for a home—*no*. It is too much a prison, too closely shut in. The house reminds me of some battlemented castle, and the circular barrier of mountains impresses me as impregnable fortifications."

Daniel Hunter laughed and pressed her arm, and called her "imaginative—*too* imaginative." And as they went back to the inn, he expressed his regret at seeing a fine place like that going to ruin, and announced his determination of becoming its purchaser. Augusta smilingly reminded him of the malison that rested upon the fatal roof, but Mr. Hunter sternly rebuked the superstition that gave birth to such false and mischievous notions.

And the end of it was that Daniel Hunter, having no such weakness in his own character, disregarded the popular legend, and became the owner of Howlet Hall. The Hall was thoroughly repaired and comfortably furnished. It was in the fourth year after their marriage that he moved into the house. The old people shook their wise heads, and prophesied and waited "to

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see what would come of it." Little Maud was born at Howlet Hall. And when it was told in the neighborhood that the mountain rose-bud, sweet Maud, the beautiful child of Daniel Hunter, the sole heiress of Howlet Hall, was lost—was drowned in the Severn river—every gaffer and goody in the region roundabout exclaimed,

"There!—what did I tell you? It is just exactly as I said! Daniel Hunter will never transmit Howlet Hall to any lineal heir of his—the 'Maiden's Malison' still rests upon the place—the murdered maiden's spirit still presides there!"

I told you that on the first outbreak of the plague in A——, the senior members of Daniel Hunter's family had fled to Howlet Hall for refuge. There they were soon joined by the girls, who were instructed to prepare the house for the reception of Augusta, later in the season. And they had faithfully performed their duty in this respect. Daniel Hunter and Augusta found in their country home the very perfection of comfort.

It was the first of October when Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, after a three years' absence, arrived at Howlet Hall. Vegetation had just begun to turn, and glowled refulgent in the golden haze of autumn. The mornings were frosty and bracing, the noons warm, bright, and mellow, and the evening just so chill as to make the fire-side a delight as well as a novelty. At no time of the year was the country more inviting. And they gave themselves up with a perfect abandonment to the repose and recreation they so much needed. The shooting season had commenced, and every morning Mr. Hunter would equip himself, take his gun, and go forth for a whole day's sport.

Augusta found her mother and sisters-in-law very busily engaged in doing *her* duty—namely, overseeing any amount of pickling, preserving, drying, and distilling. Though Letty grumbled a great deal over "all this fuss for nothing," for she complained that unless all these pickles, preserves, dried fruit and cordials were put into a wagon, and sent up to town before them, they would be of no use to any one, but stay and gather mould in the damp closets of Howlet Hall. She said she had

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grown tired of having no fixed home, and of having to circle about—sometimes at the private house, sometimes at the executive mansion, and sometimes at Howlet Hall. And she avowed she should be obliged to marry, if it was only to get settled; and that one thing was certain, she would never—with her brother Dan's example before her—think of marrying a *public* man—be he Senator, Governor, or President. For that public men were "vagabonds on the face of the earth," without any distinct occupation, or any fixed home.

When Mrs. Hunter presented her little adopted child to the family, they received the orphan with much tenderness, saying to each other that Augusta, with her ample fortune, had a perfect right to choose her own pets, whether they should be birds, puppy dogs, or pauper babes. And Letty took the child on her lap, and said it was a pretty little thing—but that it was no use, she couldn't love it—she had made a vow never to risk her happiness in loving any other child under the sun. But at the same time Letty's eyes were so full of sweet affections, that the little one looked up in her face and told its little sad story in two words—

"Mother's dead."

And Letty impulsively pressed the orphan to her bosom, while her tears of pity fell upon its bright head. And then Letty hastily arose, and set the child in Mrs. Hunter's lap, saying,

"Here, Augusta, take your plaything! I don't want to ill treat the little wretch, but I wont love it, *indeed* I wont!"

And to make good her words, Letty went next day to the Summit, and bought, out of her own private purse, a great doll, which she locked herself up in her room a whole day to dress. And afterwards she purchased in the same manner half-a-dozen bright colored fine merino remnants, which she made up into little dresses, braiding them all elaborately.

Mr. and Mrs. Hunter had been at Howlet Hall a month, and November had already arrived before they received the unexpected information of Ellen O'Leary's escape from the plague, and her continued existence, and of her having come into possession of the Silver Creek farm. It was with unalloyed plea-



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sure that Augusta first received this news. But then succeeded much perplexity in regard to the adopted child.

Mrs. Hunter knew that Sister Martha must have informed Ellen O'Leary of her adoption of the little Honoria, and she wondered why Ellen had not written to her upon the subject. She finally concluded that the mother deferred reclaiming her child until she should be comfortably settled at Silver Creek farm. But by the middle of the month Mrs. Hunter was advised that Ellen had established herself at her new home in the neighborhood, and then she waited daily in the vain expectation of receiving a visit or a message from her. But days passed without any sort of communication from Ellen. And as the time approached when Governor Hunter would be obliged to return to the city with his family, in order to be present at the meeting of the State legislature, upon the first of December, Mrs. Hunter grew very anxious, and resolved to make Ellen O'Leary a visit.

Silver Creek farm was, by the bridle path over the mountains, only six miles off. But by the roundabout carriage road, it was at least twenty miles distant. Mrs. Hunter would have preferred to go in the carriage, for that would have enabled her to take the child to see its mother. But it was almost impossible —at least extremely inconvenient for the lady to make the visit in a manner that would have detained her out all night. Therefore Mrs. Hunter—who, like all Maryland ladies, was a very accomplished equestrienne—decided to take the shortest route—the difficult and dangerous bridle path over the mountains.

It was a refulgent, glowing, autumn day when she set out on the ride. But we must precede her to Silver Creek.

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## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE ADOPTED CHILD.

Not rural sights alone, but rural sounds
Exhilarate the spirits, and restore
The tone of languid nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirts of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music, not unlike
The dash of ocean on his winding shore
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind.—*Cowper.*

When Ellen O'Leary was sufficiently recovered to be able to leave the infirmary, her first care had been to go to the lunatic asylum and inquire after her unhappy mother-in-law. She had found Norah in a state that precluded all possibility of her removal from the care of her keepers, and she had been unwillingly obliged to leave the wretched maniac in their charge. She made her few preparations, and with the two children and old Abishag set out for her new home, which she reached upon the second week in November.

Silver Creek, from which the farm took its name, was a great, dashing mountain-torrent, that leaped, sparkling and flashing, from rock to rock, until it reached the foot of the range of mountains, under the shadow of which it glided on—now smoothly and softly—now fretting and foaming among the rocky rapids—now flowing between steep precipices—now leaping over some fall, and running on until it should reach the great river that takes it to the sea.

Silver Creek farm-house was built just upon the spot where the torrent reaches the foot of the mountain, and flows under its shadow—a creek. It was a substantial cottage, with a steep roof, broad lattice windows, and walls a mosaic of various colored sandstone and quartz. Behind the cottage arose the mountain, twelve hundred feet in the air. From above, on the right hand, dashed down the impetuous torrent fall below, until it whirled around below the house, and flowed on under the mountain. On

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the left hand a gigantic elm overshadowed the cottage roof. The farm lay all around in fragments, among the glens, or wherever a fraction of arable land could be found between the rocks. A dilapidated barn and corn house, and an old "quarter" for the negro laborers, comprised the sum total of the out-buildings. A small sum of money, left Ellen O'Leary for the purpose of repairing the cottage and farm-buildings—by great economy in the outlay—served also for the purchase of a few articles of necessary furniture for housekeeping. And in one week after her arrival, she was comfortably settled in the farm-house. Her family consisted of herself, her son Willie Falconer, Sylvia Grove, (our own little Maud,) and old Abishag. And her farm-laborers were a negro family of four members—namely, Leonard Fox and his wife Mary, and their son and daughter, Leonard, jr., and Mary, jr.—in common parlance, big Len and little Len, and old aunt Moll and little Molly—though, be it known, that little Len stood six feet on his bare soles, and was stout "according" —and little Molly weighed some hundred and sixty pounds. With the kindly social nature of their race, these negroes soon attached themselves most affectionately to their gentle young mistress and her little children. And upon the whole, Ellen had nothing to complain of in her present lot. She thought, night and day, of her absent darling, Honoria, but she knew that the child was in the best possible hands, and besides, she had been advised by Father Goodrich *not* to demand her restitution—not to do anything in the premises until she should receive some communication upon the subject from Mrs. Hunter.

"For," said the priest, "that lady may still desire to adopt the child as her own, and if she does so, you cannot, my dear daughter, do a better thing for your little girl than to leave Mrs. Hunter in undisturbed possession of her. And by this time the little one has grown reconciled to her new home, and for her sake you had better deny the craving desire of your heart to see her, and not go there, lest she should grieve to come back with you."

Ellen only half acceded to the priest's views—to give up the

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child for ever, even for the child's good, was a great trial of maternal love—to voluntarily absent herself, that the little one might forget her, seemed almost too much for human nature to bear—poor Ellen took the usual course of gentle and timid natures—she deferred her decision from day to day, to see what would "turn up"—"waiting for the action of Providence," she said.

It was in this state of mind that Mrs. Hunter found her when she came to visit her in the last week of November.

It was one of those warm, refulgent, autumnal days, when we let the fire burn low, and leave the windows open, and love to sit in the sun.

The two children had gone on the mountain nutting.

Old Abishag was at the back of the house hanging out clothes.

And Ellen sat alone on her door-step, in the full blaze of the morning sun, listening to the song of the waterfall, watching the crystal flow of the creek, and the rich, autumnal foliage of the woods on the opposite hills, and thinking what a serene and blessed day and scene this was, as she mechanically plied her knitting needles.

She chanced to raise her eyes, and to her surprise, saw a lady equestrian, attended by a mounted groom, both carefully picking their perilous way among the jagged rocks, and through the foaming water, along the narrow, dangerous ledge, between the foot of the precipice and the running creek. And while Ellen was gazing breathlessly with fear and wonder to see the rider's admirable management of her steed, the lady turned her head, and revealed the beautiful, pale face, and long, black ringlets of Mrs. Daniel Hunter. The noble horse struggled up the bank, and ambled up to the cottage. The groom followed, dismounted, and came forward and assisted his mistress to alight from her saddle. Ellen O'Leary started up and ran to meet the lady.

"Your little girl is very well, and very playful, Ellen," said Mrs. Hunter, anticipating the mother's anxiety.

"I am very glad to hear it, and very glad to see you, Mrs. Hunter," replied Ellen, as she opened the gate to admit her visitor.

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"You have a rather rugged and hazardous path to your picturesque home, Ellen."

"Yes, madam, especially after a rain, when the torrent is swollen, and the creek high, as at present. Few would have ventured along that narrow ledge. I was frightened to see you, yet you were perfectly fearless."

"My Andalusian steed is as sure-footed as a mule, my dear."

They walked on to the house, and entered it. Ellen drew a large, flag-bottomed chair to the fire, and established her guest in it. And as the lady drew off her gloves, she cast an inquiring glance around. The room and its furniture had all the characteristics of old-fashioned country cottages. It was a large, square room, with a low ceiling, with two broad lattice windows, and a door between them at the south front, and two narrow windows, with a door between them to the north, with a small door leading into a bed-room at the east end, and the wide chimney-place at the west end. And the home-made rag carpet, the white oak table, the flag-bottomed chairs, black walnut chest of drawers, round looking-glass trimmed with evergreens, just the things that may be found in every old-fashioned farm-house—comprised the furniture of this apartment. But Mrs. Hunter missed something as she looked around, and finally asked,

"Where are your children, my dear? I would like to see them."

"They are gone up the mountain to get chinkapins and chestnuts."

"Are your children well since the fever, Ellen?"

"Yes, madam, perfectly well. You know that every one who recovers from that dreadful fever has better health than ever before."

"I know. What are the ages of your children, Ellen?"

"My boy, William Falconer, or Falcon, as we call him, is about six years of age—but he is so well grown, you would take him to be eight. And Sylvia is about four years old; but Sylvia is not my child."

"Ah! not your child, Ellen?"

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"No, madam. She is an orphan, but she was the only child of my husband's cousin, George Grove. Her parents died of typhus fever on their way from Ireland. And I have taken the child, and will share my children's bread with her, if it was the last crust, and it has often *been* a mere crust."

"It will never be so again, dear Ellen. You are very comfortable now."

"No, madam, it can never be so bad again, I trust. As you say, we are well provided for now. But if it were otherwise, and the last piece of bread were broken among us, Sylvia should share it, for she is Willie's relation, and Willie's relations are dear to me as my own—*just* as dear."

"I have no doubt of it, Ellen. It is natural. But, Ellen, why have you not been over to see me, or your little girl, and why have you not written to me about her?"

"Mrs. Hunter, my mind was so tossed and distracted about that same thing, I did not know what to do."

"Why, my dear Ellen, you know there is no one but yourself that has a right to decide. You have doubtless heard from Sister Martha, Ellen, the hopeless condition in which you and the other children lay when I removed this healthy one to my house? It was better that I should have taken her for a time, Ellen. It probably saved her from contracting the fever, and made her comfortable for the month. And now, my dear Ellen, she is at your disposal."

Ellen began to tremble. She thought she saw at once all the splendid prospects of her daughter melting into thin air. At last she said, in a disappointed tone,

"I thought you wished to adopt her, Mrs. Hunter?"

"And so do I, most devoutly, Ellen."

"Well, then, why? Oh! does the child fret for me and give you trouble?"

"No, Ellen. For the first few days, indeed, she grieved after you. But that must have been while you lay in the dead—in the infirmary, where she could not have been permitted to see you, of course. But after the first few days—you know the

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blessed elasticity of a child's heart—she grew very bright and cheerful, and now she plays about all day long, the blithest bird in the world, the very life of our old Hall."

"Forgotten me so soon! Well! it is like a little child! It is very well! I ought to be glad! I am glad! I *hope* I am I believe I am!" mused Ellen. Then she spoke. "Mrs Hunter?"

"Well, my dear."

'If you—if you wish to adopt her. Oh, dear me. Do you *love* her, Mrs. Hunter?"

"Very fondly and deeply, Ellen. The little creature has crept into my heart, and is at home. She is a great comfort and delight to me."

"Mrs. Hunter! if I give you my little child for your own, will you love her and do for her as for your own? Forgive me the question."

"If you give her to me I will love her, and educate her, and provide for her as if she were my own. I must have a child, Ellen. It is a necessity of my nature. And I prefer this little one, because it seems to me that Providence laid her into my lap, and because I have learned to love her. And if you will give her to me, I will do as I said, and more also."

Ellen was sobbing bitterly, but it was because she had come to a resolution, and was shedding her last tears over it. And at last she raised her eyes to the saintly, pale face of the lady, and said,

"I will give her to you, Mrs. Hunter. Heaven knows I would not do it to secure her mere advantages of rank and wealth, but I feel I can trust my child's higher interests, her intellectual and religious interest with you with more confidence than with myself. Yes, you may have her, Mrs. Hunter, and I will keep entirely away until she has totally forgotten me, though that will be very hard."

Those last words of Ellen pierced the lady's bosom to the quick—her heart was bleeding for the self-sacrificing mother. She did not speak for some time, nor until Ellen asked her,

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"Does this satisfy you, madam?"

Then she said, gently,

"My dear Ellen, I am not quite satisfied, upon your account, that you should absent yourself entirely from your child. For myself, Ellen, I would not ask it of you—how could I, indeed, sympathizing with your feelings as I do? I could not feel any jealousy of my little adopted daughter loving her real mother best; or, if such an emotion stirred in my heart, believe me I should repress it, Ellen, as a bad passion. No! As far as I am concerned, I would willingly have you come often to see your child. But, Ellen, gentlemen feel differently upon these subjects; and I am constrained to tell you the conditions Mr. Hunter made with me in consenting to my wishes in regard to this child. He also loves the little one. He is very fond of children. It has been said of him, that the love of children was the only weakness in his great nature—though God forbid it should be considered a weakness. He dearly loves little Honoria. He will *legally*—understand me—*legally* adopt her, give her his name, and every advantage of his wealth, station, and social connection; and now, Ellen, if you attach any value to these things, if you consider them advantages at all, you may listen to the terms; they seem to *our* failing hearts hard terms, Ellen, but Mr. Hunter considers them just—and I think it scarcely possible for Daniel Hunter to err in his judgment. He requires, then, that the child be entirely given up to us, and that you absent yourself from her presence long enough to fade out of her memory, so that she may consider *us* her true parents. You perceive, Ellen, that his wish is to draw the child as closely as possible to ourselves—to make her as exclusively our own as if she had been born ours. And I think he would be glad if he could deceive himself and every one else into the notion that she *is* ours. Well, Ellen, in exchange he will give her our name, position, and wealth, and all the social advantages to be gained by them. As I said before, it is for *you* to judge of their worth."

"Well, Mrs. Hunter, as *I* said before, I would not part with



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my child merely to secure her wealth and position—but I know that in giving her to you, I also secure her better interests—her Christian and intellectual welfare. I repeat it, you may take her, Mrs. Hunter, upon your husband's conditions, and I will stay away from her. It will be better for her comfort, too, poor little one! for if I were to go see her, and revive my image in her memory, she would never be satisfied—she would have a divided heart."

"And you know, dear Ellen, you can hear from her every day while we are in the country, and twice a week after we go to the city; for whenever you write to inquire after her, Ellen, wherever I may be, or whatever I may be engaged in, I shall feel it an obligation to answer such a letter on the instant. And after a few years have passed, when Honoria has grown to think that *we* are her true parents, you will visit her as often as you please, you know."

"Dear Mrs. Hunter, I thank you—you are very good. And it seems to me that I am very weak and selfish, to be letting fall these tears. But, dear lady, do not let my tears disturb you. Believe me, I am very happy to think of all you feel and all you will do for Honoria, and this is but a transient grief of mine."

"And remember this, dear Ellen, that this is not *irrevocable* —that at any time in the future, if you should feel you could not abide by the terms, you can take back your child—though I do not think you will deprive us of her,—you who have two others. And now, Ellen, I must leave you."

"But not until you get some dinner, indeed. It will be ready early."

"Indeed, my dear, I must set out almost immediately. I cannot risk your mountain roads late in the evening."

"Well, then, you can certainly stop fifteen minutes, until I make you a cup of tea."

Mrs. Hunter smiled, and re-seated herself,—more for Ellen's satisfaction than her own. And Ellen O'Leary made haste, and soon set a fragrant cup of hyson before her visitor. And after partaking of it, Mrs. Hunter arose, kissed Ellen, and departed.

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# PART SECOND.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### THE FAIR MAID OF THE MOUNTAINS.

I will paint her as I see her.
Ten times have the lilies blown
Since she looked upon the sun.—*Mrs. Browning.*

Six years, with their vicissitudes, had passed over the lives of the two families whose interwoven fortunes form the subject of our narrative. Daniel Hunter, with great eclat, had completed his second term of office as Governor of M——. And with these fresh laurels upon his god-like brow, he would willingly have retired for a space from public life. But almost immediately he was appointed Secretary of State, and was called to a seat in the Cabinet at Washington.

And Augusta, in the federal city, among the assembled wisdom and beauty of the western world, was still what she had ever been, by virtue of her imperial beauty, intellect and goodness, a queen of the *truly* "best society." At her house convened the most distinguished politicians, artists and authors; celebrated as much for moral and Christian, as for intellectual worth. And many also found a cordial welcome there, whose names were only

"In the unobtrusive paths
Of quiet goodness known."

The Hunters were still at Washington at the point of time at which we resume the thread of our story.



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Ellen O'Leary. After the early storms, a deep calm had settled upon the lives of Ellen and her little family. They still lived at the rock-bound cottage on Silver Creek, and were supported by the produce of the fractional farm. Ellen O'Leary was a very bad manager, or rather no manager at all. She knew little, because she cared little, about farming. Hers was the life-long listlessness of a long-lost hope. So that the days flowed on and her children did not suffer, she did not care. She never took the trouble to inform herself of anything connected with the interests of the farm. If she could tell a field of wheat from a patch of potatoes, it was the extent of her agricultural knowledge. She certainly could not tell a field of wheat from a field of rye.

But for the invaluable presence and services of Big Len, the farm, and everything upon it, would probably have gone to the——auctioneer's hammer! But Big Len was fidelity and skill combined. And assisted by his strapping son Little Len, faithfully worked the farm:—such as it was, with a fractional field here, there, and anywhere, broken up among the rocks—wherever in some little glen or hollow the deposit from the mountains had made a patch of arable soil. The garden occupied the little space immediately around the cottage.

And very laboriously would old Big Len work in his garden, and range about in his scattered fields, and very faithfully would he dispose of the surplus produce, and bring its price in money or goods to Ellen—which the latter always received upon trust without question. And such apathetic indifference would fall very discouragingly upon poor Big Len's faithful, affectionate heart, for he loved appreciation, like other human beings. On receiving the cash at such times, Ellen would only say,

"Don't you want some of this money, Uncle Len?"

And he would reply, mildly and slowly,

"No, honey, I aint no use for it as I knows of; I thank you, Miss Ellen;" and walk away in his rags, and his crushed hat and broken shoes, but with his spirit clothed richly and beautifully with patience, humility, and self-denial Only sometimes

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saying to himself, "Ef she o'ny did but know what a wrastle we-dem had to raise that crap o' wheat out'n that there stony field 'tween the ridges;" and then, "Oh! ef she on'y would take some intrust into things, an' know when I've made a fuss rate 'rangement."

Old Aunt Moll, his wife, had the two cows, the hogs, and the poultry under her charge. And the old woman looked as if she had eaten all the butter and eggs, and pigs and poultry that she had ever raised or made—she was so large and fat. But many were the kegs of butter, baskets of eggs, pairs of fowls, and great turkeys and geese and sucking pigs for roasting, that old Aunt Moll would put into the wagon, to be sold, or bartered for groceries, shoes, or dry goods for the family, when Big Len would be going to town.

Old Abishag was the cook, house-servant, spinner and knitter to the little establishment. And she, too, frequently added, of the works of her hands, a half-dozen pair of coarse yarn socks, to be exchanged at the village shop for—"two pounds of sugar, a pound of coffee, and a quarter of a pound of tea." Or else for—"a pair of number seven girl's shoes, and a pair of number ten boy's."

But the surplus products of the small farm, and garden, dairy, poultry-yard, and spinning-wheels, were not the sole resources of the family, nor would they have been sufficient for their support. There was another means of adding to their income. Every fall Little Len would range about among the vales and hollows, and gather the coarse broom grass, and the sedgy reeds that grow along the margin of the streams, and collect it together and dry it, and tie it in sheafs and house it. And in the long winter evenings, in the kitchen, while Aunt Moll and old Abishag would be spinning or knitting, and telling old stories, Big Len and Little Len would sit down with a great bundle of this broom grass and coarse sedge between them, and with no instrument but a jack-knife, cut and plat and twine and weave this simple material into door-mats, coarse straw hats, baskets, brooms, and seats for children's chairs, the *frames* for the latter being cut



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and trimmed by the aforesaid jack-knife, from the tough and supple boughs of the cedar tree. Quite a wagon load of these articles would be amassed by the spring, and Big Len would take them to town, and return with a small fortune for his winter's work—with from twenty to thirty dollars.

Old Aunt Moll's strapping daughter, Little Moll, or Tiny, as she was as frequently called, was hired out, but often came home through the month to spend a night with her mother. And, upon the whole, the party in the kitchen were much more industrious, useful, and happy than the party in the adjoining *parlor*, if Ellen's humble family-room deserved the name. Little change had come over Ellen's room in these six years. The front latticed windows fronting south, still looked upon the rugged, precipitous fall of rocks from the cottage gate to the edge of the creek, and upon the narrow foaming creek, and upon the high hills across it, still crowned with the forest. And the narrow back windows still looked only into the back yard, and upon the close, perpendicular wall of rock that rose thousands of feet above the house, and stretched many miles east and west of it. The little narrow door at the east end of the room, admitted into Ellen's bed-chamber, which she shared with the children, and the door at the west end, beside the fire-place, led into the large, cheerful kitchen. All this was unchanged. But the humble furniture had suffered somewhat in the service. The rag carpet upon the floor, and the blue paper blinds at the windows were somewhat faded, but the white oak table, and the chip-bottomed chairs were as good as ever, and the black walnut chest of drawers had become darker and more polished than before. And the only additional thing in the room was a black oak cupboard, with glass doors, that sat on the other side of the fire-place from the kitchen door. Nor had Ellen changed much—a quiet, patient, unexcitable grief does not wear its subject out very rapidly. It is true that her white cheeks were thinner, but her gentle, blue eyes were undimmed, and her soft, fair hair unfaded. Her life flowed smoothly and calmly along—its monotony would have been wearisome beyond sufferance to any one

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of less serenity of temperament. She passed her days in knitting and sewing, and in teaching the children—she was very faithful in the discharge of this last mentioned duty. Her simple recreations were an evening ramble with the children through the woods, or up the mountain, a row upon the creek where the water was smooth, an occasional ride with the children in a wagon to the village to find some new school-book that they wanted, and an annual journey to the city to visit her wretched relative at the lunatic asylum. There was no church or school-house in the neighborhood, and her Sabbaths were passed in reading devotional books in the forenoon, in rambling through the forest in the afternoon, and in telling church legends of saints and angels to the children by the evening fire.

Her only epistolary correspondence was with Mrs. Hunter, with whom she exchanged a letter every month, and from whom she continually heard the most satisfactory accounts of Honoria —satisfactory, except in *one* respect—that Honoria seemed to have forgotten that she had ever had other parents than Mr. and Mrs. Hunter. Mr. Hunter had legally and regularly adopted her. And she was known only as Miss Hunter, the only daughter and heiress of the great Daniel Hunter. And she was the beauty, the pride, and the boast of all the singing and dancing schools, and all the juvenile balls and parties, and "always Queen of May." But in consenting thus to Honoria's premature entrance into the vanities, rivalries and selfishness of a *juvenile* fashionable world, Mrs. Hunter wrote that she had acted against her own better judgment, and in accordance with the customs of the city, and that now, having seen the effect of these amusements upon the mind and manners of Honoria to be anything but desirable, she should put a stop to it.

Ellen had no neighbors—in fact that rugged mountainous district was very sparsely settled, and the roads were so intolerably bad, as to amount to a positive embargo upon social intercourse. The tax-gatherer, Mr. Ipsy, was her only visitor, and he came but once a year.

Ellen's children, nurtured under the severe but salutary dis-

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cipline of poverty, seclusion, and self-denial, were good and intelligent as they were beautiful.

Her son, Falcon O'Leary, was a fine, manly boy of thirteen years of age. He was tall and slender for his years, yet of firm, elastic frame, with nerves and sinews well strung for strength, agility and grace. He inherited the gipsy skin, black hair, and eagle eye of Norah. No step upon the mountain was like his—his flashing glance, quick, clear tones, and agile spring, were in perfect unison. It was his delight to rise in the morning before the sun, and with his light fowling-piece to range the mountains, and return with a well-filled bag of game before the family were ready to sit down to breakfast. Or at noon to sit under some broad spreading elm, or upon some projecting point of rock, receiving into his expanding soul the beauty and the glory of nature; or simply charmed with some individual effect of light and shade upon mountain, valley, or forest—trying to reproduce it upon paper; often throwing down his pencil with a tyro's disgust at his own awkwardness and failure, but oftener working on, inspired with the young artist's exquisite sense of genius, and the thrilling presentiment of future fame and power. Or by the evening fire to sit, and with no other tool but his penknife, carve from bits of cedar-wood, a doll for his sister, or a little vase for his mother; but these were his lightest pastimes, and always finished with a sigh as from an undefined consciousness, that the work was unworthy, and the time wasted. He wanted help—he wanted materials—he wanted instruction—he wanted encouragement. And deeply and strongly, yet vaguely, he felt the want of them. There was no spirit near him to bear witness with *his* spirit that he was a child of Art. He had learned all his mother could teach him. The books at his command had been read and re-read, and digested and assimilated, and now his eager, hungering mind, had only nature to feed upon—and that chiefly nurtured his artistic genius; and perhaps to that early deprivation of books and ministration of nature, he was indebted for the singular originality, strength, and independence of his mind. Let him alone—let him work his upward way through

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the doubt and gloom and obscurity, of early life, like the sun through the darkness, clouds and fog of early morning, until, like the sun, he shines upon the world in cloudless splendor.

But Maud, "sweet Maud," sweeter now at ten years old than ever before—how shall I paint for you her exquisite loveliness? The child of Daniel Hunter and Augusta Percival—the child of genius and love, beauty and goodness, united and blended in perfect harmony; what should she be but divinely beautiful? Yet of that heavenly beauty—that perfect harmony of soul and body, of form, feature and complexion, I can give you no more adequate idea, than I could of the music of the spheres. I cannot place the bright, warm, glowing LIFE before you, in all its splendor. I can only give the lifeless portrait, And here it is. Her form was elegantly proportioned, with a finely shaped head and neck—a rounded chest, and falling shoulders—and rounded limbs tapering towards the slender wrists and ankles, and small feet, and hands whose very finger-ends were of the most exquisite delicacy of finish. And her every attitude and movement was the perfection of grace. It has been said that there is no complete beauty without some *unique* trait. Now, to a superficial observer, the unique point in Maud's beauty was her luxuriant hair, that hung down to her waist in long, sunny, golden-brown ringlets. Her forehead was as fair and smooth as the polished white petal of the camelia japonica. Her eyebrows were slender, black arches, tapering away to the finest points—her eyes were of the clearest, purest, deepest blue, and shaded with long black lashes. Her cheeks and budding lips were flushed with a delicate rose tint.

And the only effect of the forest and mountain sun and air upon her beautiful complexion, was to ripen its delicate bloom to a rich glow. But it was the heavenly beauty of the soul within that gave the wondrous charm to Maud's lovely face. She was not a child of quick impulses or strong passions. Her affections were quiet, profound and eternal. In self-reliance she seemed rather diffident, and in self-defence timid; but in the cause and service of her friends, her resolution amounted to a total forget-

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fulness or disregard of consequences, and her courage would have seemed rashness, but for her passionless, deliberate manner of proceeding.

An instance—a well authenticated instance—will illustrate this: it was but a trifle in one aspect, yet a thrilling adventure in another. It was a cause disproportionate to the effect—an occasion inadequate to the action. But it was like our child to do as she did.

It happened, upon a glorious afternoon in October, her brother and herself went out to walk, and taking the circuitous path above the cottage, ascended the mountain-top to its highest point, and came out upon a projection of rocks that overhung Silver Creek—the latter twining like a glittering serpent at its base.

At the first glance down from the dizzy height, her head reeled and her eyes failed, and she clung trembling to her brother's arm for support, and after a moment sat down upon the rocks.

And Falconer seated himself by her side; but his eyes roved far away over the grand and glorious panorama of hills and vallies and forests, clothed in gorgeous autumnal foliage, and streams, and lakes, and waterfalls, and distant ranges of blue mountains, with the sunset clouds beyond them, outflung like the oriflamme of retiring day! And as the boy-artist gazed, his soul and cheek and eye kindled to the theme, and exclaiming, partly to himself, partly to his companion—"Here is an effect of light and shade—a culmination of glory that may not happen again in a thousand years,"—he seized his port-folio, and hastily throwing it open, selected his materials and began to sketch rapidly—that no evanescent shadow of a sailing purple cloud upon the mountain, nor glancing ray of crimson light between the hills might vanish before it was made immortal. For even so felt the boy-artist in his enthusiasm.

And so he worked away—Maud sitting forgotten by his side, yet strongly interested, and glancing—whenever she could do so without interrupting him—over his shoulder, at the progress of his work, until the sketch was finished, and the gorgeous glory had faded from the west, and the full moon had risen in the east and

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flooded the scene with her silvery splendor. And then the boy arose, with the glow still upon his cheek, and placed the drawing in his port-folio and closed it, replying to Maud's eager look—

"You shall see to-morrow, Sylvia—I have to touch it up a little, and some of these days, when I can get the material, and more skill, I mean to copy that on a large scale in oil. I wouldn't take anything in the world for this sketch, Sylvia," he said, speaking at once under the influence of the artist's enthusiasm and the boy's recklessness of assertion.

But at the same moment—and how it happened he never could tell—as he stooped to help his little sister up, the port-folio twitched itself out of his hand, and with one or two pitches and rebounds tumbled down the precipice.

The boy stood aghast.

Reader, if your pocket-book, with all your fortune in it, had dropped in the sea, you could not have felt more ruined than he did! The port-folio was all his treasure, and it was gone. He did not speak a word nor move an inch for a full minute.

Maud, with her face full of trouble, stood watching him. She spoke first, and hopefully—

"Maybe it fell all the way to the bottom, and if it did, we can get it again, for you know the creek is low now."

"I'll see," said Falconer, with new hope lightening his face; and he got down on his hands and knees, and stretched his head over the shelving rock, and looked down—Maud watching him almost breathlessly. Soon he drew back his head, and got upon his feet and said, with a despairing air—"No! It is just where it never can be got at. It has lodged in a cedar bush, growing out of a fissure in the rocks, about half-way down the precipice."

Maud went down upon her hands and knees, and crept to the edge of the steep, and looked over.

"Come away, Sylvia! you'll fall!" exclaimed the boy, going after her, and helping her up. "Don't do that again, Sylvia! It never makes me dizzy to look down a precipice, but it makes me sick to see you at its edge."

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"Could any one go down and get it, Falconer?"

"'Could any one go down?' Yes! *you* could, and you *will*, too, if you lean so far over another time."

"I mean—could any one *climb* down and get it?"

"'Any one climb down?' Yes! and never come back again!"

"I know it looks dreadful! But it is safer to climb *up some* rocks—do you think any one could climb *up?*"

"They say a *goat* can climb almost anywhere, but I don't believe it—a *cat* could, perhaps. It is gone, Sylvia—lost—my port-folio is lost."

"And you said you would not take the world—I mean—anything in the world, for that sketch; and that was only one, and the port-folio was *full* of them."

"It's no use to talk about that now, Sylvia, it is gone," said the boy, with a deep sigh.

"And if it hadn't been for helping *me* up, you wouldn't have dropped it."

"Never mind, Sylvia! Never mind, little sis! It was not *your* fault, little chicken; it was my own carelessness."

"No it wasn't, it was your helping me up, made you lose it."

"What! *crying*—my goodness! why *I* don't cry about it myself."

"Oh! but you set so much store by it, and I see how you *look*, *too*," said Maud, wiping her eyes, "and I know your sketches are gone, and your pencils and india rubber, and *all* your drawing paper, and I know how hard it is to get them, and Big Len wont be going to town till he carries the Christmas turkies to market."

"It seems to me, little sis, that your talk is very consoling, and that you must have learned how to comfort from Job's wife."

The gibe would have been well deserved but that Maud was talking far more to herself than to her brother, and that she was also deliberately forming a resolution. They left the mountain, and descending by the same circuitous path, reached the cottage by supper time.

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But the next morning, when the little family assembled for prayers, Maud was missed. And to Ellen's question as to whether any one had seen Sylvia, old Abishag answered that she had seen her take her bonnet, and run out of the cottage gate more than an hour before, and that was just after the child had left her mother's bed-room. They waited a little while without anxiety for Sylvia to return. But she came not. And they had prayers, and sat down to breakfast, in the momentary expectation of the child's reappearance. But breakfast was finished, and still she came not, and Ellen grew anxious, and ran out to meet Big Len, whom she saw approaching the house.

"Uncle Len, have you seen anything of Sylvia this morning?"

"Yes, honey, I seen her gwine along under the mountain airly this morning."

"What, a child! to go off chestnut hunting before breakfast?" said Ellen, relieved of her anxiety, but feeling much vexation.

But Falcon O'Leary had heard with a changing cheek, and now snatching his hat, he rushed off breathless towards the base of the gigantic pile of rocks, from the top of which he had dropped his port-folio. His narrow, difficult, dangerous path lay along the slippery ledge of rocks, between the creek and the foot of the mountain ridge. It was a path along which he usually picked his way with the greatest care, holding by the saplings, but now he ran on heedless of danger—now almost in the water —now torn by thorn bushes—now swinging himself by the aid of an overhanging sapling around some projecting crag, and anxious only to reach his point of destination.

He reached the spot at last—the base of that awful column of rocks. He looked up—at first he could see nothing but the gray, rugged face of the rock, with the cedar saplings and thorn bushes growing here and there from its fissures, and then—oh, heaven! yes there was Maud about two-thirds up the ascent! An intervening cedar bush had momentarily concealed her from his view, but now there she was! The sight of her—of her supreme peril—nearly felled him to the ground—he reeled as under a blow. There she was, clambering up, her eyes lifted to



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the top of the mountain, the precious port-folio for which she had recklessly periled her life, safe in her apron, the corners of which were held together between her teeth, while she used her hands and feet in climbing, fixing each step firmly upon some little projecting fragment of rock, and holding carefully by the thorn bushes and cedar saplings that grew from the frequent fissures. It was well for her that the face of the precipice was so broken and rugged, and that the bushes were so numerous, else might she never have reached the top in safety. And as the boy watched her, it seemed as if the very hand of death had clutched his heart and stopped his pulses. He was utterly *powerless* to aid her! an *army* could not have aided her—no human power could have helped her. And as in breathless prayer to God he watched her fearful ascent, he saw that though her cheek was blanched with terror, her eyes were resolutely upward, still upward. At length she gained the brow of the precipice—he saw her clamber over it in safety, and then disappear. He thought she had fallen —fainted when her safety was secured. He was near fainting himself with the rushing reaction. But he controlled himself by a powerful effort, and turned and fled up a winding path that led up the mountain. Quickly he reached the mountain top, and rushed out to the brow of the precipice. Yes, there she lay fainting sure enough, beside her the nearly fatal port-folio! In a furious fit of anger against the insensible object for which she had perilled her life—the boy seized the port-folio and hurled it flying over the precipice, and then caught his sister up in his arms and burst into such a passion of tears as only a boy like him could shed. Maud was not insensible, only fainting, drooping, and her first question was,

"Why, Falcon, what's the matter? The port-folio is safe."

"Oh!"

That was all he said, but it came with a tone as if some one had speared him.

"Let's go home, Ellen will be uneasy," said Maud, gently disengaging herself, but still trembling slightly.

"Sit down, Sylvia, you are too weak yet; oh, why did you go climb the precipice?"

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"To get the port-folio," answered, Maud, simply.

"But, good heaven, didn't you know the danger?"

"Yes—but it wa'n't half so bad as any one would think, to look at it—there were so many bushes to hold by."

'But, my gracious, child, to think of it; wa'n't you afraid?"

'Yes, I was scared all but to death, when I got up very high; but you know I couldn't go back, and that was the reason why I never looked down—and because I heard Big Len say that if any one climbing up a dangerous height looked down, they'd be almost sure to fall; so, though I was dreadfully frightened, I looked up all the time—and here I am safe."

"Well, then, what in the name of sense *did* you go for?"

"To get the port-folio. Where is it?"

'Never mind the port-folio. I picked it up," said Falconer, repenting that in a fit of passion he had thrown away the treasure for which she had perilled her life. And he took his sister's hand, and led her down the mountain by the safe winding path to the cottage. They reached home and found Ellen sitting by the parlor fire, knitting very composedly, and a bowl of milk covered with a covered plate of pan-cakes, sitting upon the hearth to keep warm for the little truant.

"You must not go out nutting again before breakfast, my dear," she said, as she arose and set the milk and bread upon the table.

It was a beautiful October morning—and even while the bright little fire was burning gayly on the hearth, the front south door and windows were open, letting in the warm, refulgent sunlight, and the beautiful landscape—first the little front yard, with its late roses and bright colored dahlias, chrysantheums and marigolds—and then the descent of gray rocks, with their brilliantly variegated mosses—and the winding creek below, reflecting in its mirror-like water the dark cliffs and the gorgeous wooded hills opposite.

Falconer took his Plutarch and seated himself at one of the windows to read, but full often his eye and mind would wander from the printed volume to Nature's glorious one.

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When Maud had finished her light breakfast, Ellen said to her,

"Take the bowl and plate into the kitchen and wash them, and put them away, my dear. Old Abishag is not here to wait on you this morning."

"Where is she, Ellen?" asked Maud, as she gathered the things together."

"I sent her over to Mr. Bill Ipsey's, to see if he had brought the geography and atlas I asked him to buy for you, when he went to town."

"Oh—!"

"I hope she will get it, for then we can begin studying to-day."

"Oh! I'm *so*—"

"For indeed you ought to have begun to learn geography long ago—only I couldn't raise the money to get the books."

"Oh, Ellen, I'm *so* glad and thankful!"

"There, never mind now, run away with the things, and brush down the table."

Maud did so, and returned and took her little work-basket and patch-work quilt, and went and sat at the other front window, in the sun, to sew.

Ellen retained her seat by the fire, and sat plying her knitting-needles, and watching the children, and sometimes sending her gaze appreciatingly through the sunny, open door to the beautiful still scene without.

Suddenly the sunlight in the doorway was darkened, and old Abishag stood there—but, oh—such a figure! Her frock and petticoats wet and muddy up to the knees—her old black satin Methodist bonnet crushed down over her face and nose, and her eyes—what could be seen or guessed of them, under the ruins of the bonnet—fiery red with rage.

They all looked up, and gazed at her in astonishment.

"Yas! you-dem may stare wid all de eyes you has, you may! But I'se come for justice on to dat dere young rip'rate, I has!" she exclaimed, shaking her head and fist furiously at Mrs. O'Leary's son and heir.

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"ME!" exclaimed Falconer, looking up from his book, as in a dream.

"Yas! *you, you!* you good for not'ing dissrev'rent young ripo'rate you! You tink I didn't know nuffin 'tall 'bout its bein' of you; you hidin', seekin', way-layin', highway robber, bandit, you."

"Why, what on earth has he been doing?" asked Ellen, in amazement.

"What hez he been a doin' of? Look at my 'spectable Methody bonnet!"

"But how did it happen?"

"*He* knows how it happened of! a tiresome, aggrawokin' young 'sassinator! He went an' huv dis yer rotten-infunnelly ole side-saddle o' a pocket-book on my head, as I was a passin' underneaf o' de rocks—an' leetle more to knocked my brains out."

And with this consistent and satisfactory description, she contemptuously flung Falconer's unlucky port-folio on the floor.

The boy sprang with joy to seize his restored prize, and now understanding the whole drift of the charge, went into an inextinguishable fit of laughter, which kindled the old woman's rage to fury.

"Yes! You may laugh, you young 'sassin, you!" she exclaimed, shaking and spluttering with passion. "You may laugh! But ef you an' your ma tinks I'se gwine to put up long o' yer ins'lence, you-dem's wery much 'ceived? I'se been long o' you-dem a dreat many years, troo evil 'port an' good 'port—fur better, fur wusser—tell def do us apart, amen! But ef you-dem tinks *me*, in *my* 'spectable, 'sponsible ole ages o' life, is a gwine to let my rip-roarin' young marster walk it over me, you-dem's wery much 'ceived in your mines. I'll be sell to Georgy fuss! *I will.* So, Miss Ellen, you may jes' git me a new missus or marser soon as ever you likes, an' put de money in yer pocket to send dat young willian to school, afore he gets hisself sent to a wuss place!"

"Oh, Abishag! how *can* you talk so? You have no respect



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for yourself, and no consideration for my feelings. If Falconer has—"

"No 'sideration for your feelin's! 'Sider my *bonnet*—'sider *dat!* 'Sider my Methody bonnet, as was my 'spectable ole mudder's afore me! an' as I has been a' wearin' to meetin' an' to luv-feeses dis twenty-odd years past, an' nebber got it spilte tell to-day. 'Sider of *dat!*"

"I do consider it, and you shall have a new one!"

"A *new* one! A *new* one! Jes' as if I ebber could get usen to a *new* one in my old days! It—it—it—mos'—mos' breaks my heart—it do! jes' on'y look at my poor, dear, onfort'nit, pitiful ole frien'!"

And Abishag took off her crushed bonnet, and sat down and fairly wept over it, as if it had been a crushed child. But Maud came and gently slipped it from her hands, and began to straighten the bent wires. And Ellen said,

"I cannot think that Falconer has wantonly injured you, and if he has, he shall make you full reparation."

"I dunno what you-dem calls *wantonly*, but I knows, I does, dat he *did wanted* to do it. But, av coorse, Miss Ellen, you's his mudder, an' you's boun' to take his part—it's nat'rel natur'!"

"Not if he is wrong, certainly. But tell me all about it."

"I'se a gwine to! You shill hear! An' den you'll know fer yersef who's wanton an' who's suff'rin', ole, innercence, in 'stress! Dis yer was de way of it! I was jes' a comin' 'long home from Marse Bill Ipsy's, by dat 'fernal norrow, slipperish path 'atween de mountain an' de crik, an' a pickin' my way careful wid a stick, to keep from tumblin' down into de water. An' I wa'n't a tinkin' o' no more harm, please my bressed Marster! dan a poor, dear, innercen', suckin' pig a goin' to market to be sold! An' I passes unnerneaf o' dat dare drotted Eagle's Beak, or whateber de 'fernal rock's name is, an' jes' as I had for to be more 'tickler nor ever, to keep from fallin' down 'mong de slipperish slabs an' water puddles, dat dare infunnelly young rip'rate was hid up dere on de rock somewhere, in de cedar bushes a watchin' o' me, an' o' tinkin' to hisself wot an ole fool I was, an'

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how he'd sarve me out. But nebber mine! *he'll* git sarve out some o' dese days, mine I tell you! Well, so jes' as I gits unnerneaf o' him, he takes good aim, an' heaves dat darned etarnal ole gig top of a fort-poly down upon top o' my 'voted head! smashed my bonnet on to my face, an' hit my nose an' knocked me down fur dead! True as I'm a tellin' o' you, Miss Ellen! an' *he* knows it, too! It's de massy o' de Lor' I had a good, thick, 'stantial head o' my own, or else I makes not de leas' doubt I bin stretch out, *dead!*"

"Falconer, can you explain your conduct?"

"Yes, mother," answered the boy, pausing in his laughter; and going up to the old woman, he asked,

"Aunt Abishag, did you ever know me to do *any* one an ill turn, or play *you* a trick in all my life?"

"Not afore! No, I nebber *did*. Dat I *will* say for yer! But you no business to begin *now*, an' I'll have sassagefaction!" answered the old woman, glancing side-long threats from her fiery eye.

"And I haven't done it now, Aunt Abishag. I threw the port-folio over the precipice because I was vexed. But I didn't know that *any* one was under it, much less *you*. And now, to explain it, I must tell a little story," he concluded, glancing affectionately at his sister.

And Falconer O'Leary commenced and related the whole adventure of the lost port-folio, with his sister's daring escalade for its recovery, and his own rash passion in again throwing away the restored treasure. Old Abishag listened with many a grunt and groan, and many an anxious "Humph!" and "Marster Lord!" as she uneasily shifted her head from resting first upon one hand and then upon the other. Ellen heard with a pale cheek in breathless silence. And when her son had finished, and while his eagle eye was still flashing with excitement, she called the girl and boy to her side, and, embracing Maud with one arm, while she smoothed back her lustrous ringlets from her face, she said,

"Oh, my dear child, promise me you will never do such a thing again."

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"I never will, indeed, Ellen, if it hurts you so! How white your face is, Ellen, and how cold your hands are! were you so scared about me, Ellen?" asked Maud, tenderly embracing her friend.

"Oh, my love! I think I shall never feel a peaceful moment again when you are out of my sight!" replied Mrs. O'Leary, pressing the child closer to her bosom.

"Don't be afraid, Ellen! I promise you never to do so again."

"My poor little lamb! Wa'n't you frightened to death at such a venture?"

"Indeed, I was, Ellen! When I got up so high, I trembled so I almost let go my hold of the bushes—but I wouldn't look down—I looked up always, and so I got up safe!"

Ellen still held her closely clasped with one arm, while she sank into thought. At last she said,

"My dear children, I want you to observe and remember *this*—it will be serviceable to you in the future—that in the moral and Christian life there is just such a perilous mount—from which, if you look down, you are almost sure to fall—upon which the only safety is upward and upward. And, my dear Falconer, recollect *this, too*,—that even after such a victory, the dear-bought prize may, in a single instant of rashness or passion, be cast to the winds!"

And Ellen, having deduced her own little moral, which certainly might have been more clearly illustrated, dismissed the boy and girl, and resumed her knitting. Falconer returned to his book by the window, and Maud, having perfectly straightened and brushed the "'spectable Methody bonnet," restored it to its owner, who turned it about in her hands, saying,

"Why, who'd o' t'ought it! It's as straight as it wur afore, an' a dreat deal more cleaner, bless Marster! Tanky, honey! I'se much 'bleeged to you, indeed! An', Marse Falcon, chile, shake han's, honey! Your ole aunty didn't mean nuffin' 'tall, chile! 'deed she didn't! It's on'y her talk! She wouldn't hurt her boy's feelin's for all de moneys on de yeth! let 'lone 'funnelly ole Methody bonnets! Lor'! I'm so glad it looks so well! I wouldn' o' took de worl' for it!"

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And so chattering, the old woman crossed the room and patted the head of the laughing youth, and called him "a fine boy, and a credit to the family." And then she gave Ellen the geography and atlas she had brought from Mr. Bill Ipsy's, and saying she would "have to put on a dry coat, and see arter dinner," left the room.

And Ellen opened the parcel, and her little pupil was soon engaged in the new world that the new books opened to her view.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### THE GUEST

A little, upright, pert, tart, tripping wight
That holds his precious self, his dear delight.—*Burns.*

Yet he has shrewd wit I can tell you; and he's a good man enough; he's one of the soundest judgments and a proper man of person.—*Shakspeare.*

"Miss Ellen, honey, I met Mr. Bill Ipsy as I was a comin' over from de mill dis mornin', an' he quest of me to 'form you, how he do hisseff de pleasure o' waitin' on you dis evenin'!" said Big Len, putting his head through the kitchen door into Ellen's parlor.

"Very well, Uncle Len—but what is he coming for? I've paid my taxes?"

"I dunno, honey, indeed, I didn't ax him."

"Of course you didn't. Well, tell Abishag to make some batter for waffles, for he will be sure to stay to supper."

Big Len nodded, in his slow, deferential way, and withdrew his head, and shut the door.

"Look, yer, old man, what de debbil dat 'funnelly fool ebberlastin' trottin' here fer? Is he trottin' arter our Miss Ellen?"

"I dunno, Abby—I reckon it's business," said Big Len, in his meek, slow way.

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"Business? Is *you* turned a sinkin', infunnelly fool, in *your* ole days? Jess like *business* wur gwine to fetch him here almos' ebery mont'. He usen to come more 'an once a year; now, bless patience, ef he don't trot ober here almos' ebery mont' dat roll ober our head. Better not be arter our Miss Ellen. I make him fly off'n dis yer plantatshum faster 'an ebber he comed on to it! I ain't agoin' to 'low no marster put ober *me*, at my time o' life, 'deed ain't *I*. He's a proper lookin' gemman, too—he takes my eye, 'deed does *he*. But, 'deed he better not let me hear him drappin' soff nonsinse into our Miss Ellen's ear; *ef* he do—Lor!"

"You better tend to them there waffles, or they wont have time to rise for supper."

"An' who debbil care ef dey don't? I reckon corn griddle cake is good nuff for *him*, ef its good nuff for we-dem."

In due time, Mr. Bill Ipsy made his appearance. He was a very nice little gentleman, indeed, with some striking and *not* altogether disagreeable personal peculiarities. He was rather below the medium stature, but of perfectly elegant figure, with fine chest and shoulders, neatly turned waist, and trig little limbs. His dress was always *point-device*, his beaver as glossy, his gloves as fresh, and his boots as shining for the mountain wilderness as for the city walks. He had a fine, intellectual looking head—quite bald on the top, but encircled by tightly curling silky black hair around behind from temple to temple, with quite a fair broad forehead, small Roman nose, prominent chin, and keen eyes; and eyebrows so flexible, that one thought of nothing else, when looking at him, and remembered nothing else after he was gone but his restless eyebrows. His movements were all swift and smoôth—his step tripping, his voice chirping, and at the least emotion his eyebrows danced up and down as if galvanized. When he entered Mrs. O'Leary's parlor upon this evening, his dress was unusually finished—for in addition to the speckless jet black coat and pantaloons, the spotless linen white vest, glossy beaver, shining boots, and fresh gloves, a heavy rich watch-chain crossed his waistcoat, a diamond breast-pin

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sparkled on his bosom, and a blood-stone sea ring glowed on the little finger of his ungloved hand. His step, as he came tripping forward towards his hostess, was springier, and his tones as he greeted her, cheerier than ever before.

Old Abishag, peeping through the kitchen door, declared he looked "'Cisely like a 'groom, but that that should not hinder her from pitchin' of him neck an' heels right outn' dat door ef he didn' 'have hisself."

Mr. Bill Ipsy never did otherwise than behave himself. And upon the present occasion, if he was unusually spry and chirruping, and if his eyebrows danced a perfect fandango above his eyes, it was not that he entertained any bride-groomish ideas whatever, but simply because he had some excellent good news to tell his hostess. So when he had set his hat upon the table, and had seated himself in the chair she invited him to take, he turned to her, in his glib way, and announced,

"We are to have neighbors here in March, madam."

"Ah, who are they?"

"Governor Daniel Hunter has announced his intention of retiring from public life at the close of the present administration, and settling permanently at his seat, Howlet Hall."

"Oh! I knew something of *that*. Mrs. Hunter, who writes to me occasionally, has intimated as much. But March is sometime off yet, Mr. Ipsy."

"Three months, madam; but that is not all!" he added, with a polite wave of his little jewelled hand; "that is not all; the mere circumstance of Daniel Hunter settling himself finally amongst us, is certainly in itself a highly important event, fraught with great good to the neighborhood—yet it is not all! But Daniel Hunter, with that greatness of soul that characterizes him, has purchased a lot at the Summit, and has sent down an architect and a staff of builders to plan and lay out and erect a church, for which he purposes to engage a pastor and pay his salary. He further intends to build a model school-house, and employ a teacher at his own expense, until the public here can be awakened to the duty of taking some measures for securing

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the benefit of education to all classes of children in this neigh borhood. Altogether, it is an enormous expense for one man to take upon himself, but Daniel Hunter does not shrink from it. His wife's ample fortune enables him to do this with the greater ease—and Mrs. Hunter, with her characteristic nobility, has placed it all at her husband's disposal."

"Augusta has the soul of an empress!" exclaimed Ellen, energetically.

"Or rather such as an empress *ought* to have."

"*Yes*, such as an empress *ought* to have. This surprises me very much. And yet it should not. It is unlike everybody else, but it is like Daniel Hunter and his wife to act with magnificent munificence. When will all this be commenced?"

"Immediately, madam. The architect and his assistants are now at the Summit. Mr. Hunter has written to me, authorizing me to assist and advise them whenever and wherever they may require it. He has also appointed me treasurer and pay-master of the concern. The spot is already selected. The foundation will be laid in a day or so, and the works will be carried on to completion, with a rapidity compliant to Mr. Hunter's own promptitude of resolution and execution—for his one imperative condition is, that the church be built and *well* finished, in time to be ready for dedication at Easter."

"At Easter! That is not over four months off, but I suppose if neither money nor labor is spared, it can be done."

"Certainly, madam. And Daniel Hunter understands that where capital is at hand, it is not good economy to loiter over the completion of a work."

"And by Easter *they* also will be well settled at the Hall. I am *very* glad that we shall have a church, and *very* glad they are coming to settle down with us."

The entrance of old Abishag, to set the tea-table, put a momentary stop to the conversation—a stop which, by the way, aroused the old woman's jealous fears for her favorite, and caused her to cast many a threatening side-long glance at the dapper little gentleman visitor, as she laid the cloth, and went

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to and fro between the cupboard and the table. The children came in from their afternoon ramble, and when tea was ready, the little family and their visitor all gathered around their table. And the projected new church and school-house at the Summit, formed the subject of conversation. And the munificence of Daniel Hunter and his wife elicited the warmest expressions of admiration; and their proposed coming was anticipated with great impatience.

Very soon after tea Mr. Ipsy took his departure.

"What are you thinking of, Sylvia?" asked her brother, that evening, as they sat around a little stand before the parlor fire—Ellen knitting, Sylvia sewing her patchwork, and Falconer touching up a new sketch. "What are you thinking of so gravely, little sis?"

"I was thinking of Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Hunter. Oh, Falconer—"

"What?"

"I don't know, but it made my heart *burn* so, when I heard of their goodness and greatness—and especially when I heard of their courage and devotion in the time of the plague. And oh, Falconer, besides—"

"Well, besides what?"

"Oh, *this*, then!—that I feel it in my heart that I would do as they did!"

And Maud pressed both hands to her bosom, and her beautiful countenance shone seraphic with enthusiasm.

A few weeks after this Ellen received a letter from Mrs. Hunter, informing her of the health and welfare of her family, and of Honoria's progress and beauty, &c., and requesting her to ride over and open Howlet Hall to the sun and air, and have fires lighted in the hearths, to dry the dampness out before the arrival of Miss Letty and Mr. Douglass Hunter, who were to come down in February to oversee the repairing and re-furnishing of the house, and the completion of the general preparations for the reception of the family.

"I may as well take the children, and go by the carriage-road,



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and stay over night at once, for little could be done in one day," said Ellen.

And forthwith she arose, and gave her orders that the ox-cart should be ready by daybreak the next morning, to convey them to Howlet Hall. And then she set Maud and Falconer to work getting provisions together, and packing a hamper, to be taken with them next day. The girl and boy were delighted with the idea of a journey that had all the novelty of an adventure for them. And long before daybreak the next morning they were up, and had waked up Big Len, to gear up the ox-cart, and were hurrying old Abishag with the breakfast. So, thanks to their energy and activity, the little party were ready to set out, even before the proposed hour of departure. Ellen left the house in the charge of old Abishag, Aunt Moll and Little Len, and taking Big Len with her to drive the cart, and to assist her at the Hall, she set forth upon her expedition with the overjoyed boy and girl.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE PORTRAIT IN THE OLD HALL.

Those lips are thine—thy own sweet smile I see
The same that oft in dreams hath solaced me.
Voice only fails, else now distinct they say
Grieve not, my child—chase all thy griefs away.—*Cowper.*

It turned out to be a splendid winter day. The ground and the trees were covered with white hoar frost that sparkled in the first rays of the rising sun. The air was sharp and fresh, but our travellers were well wrapped up, and keenly enjoyed the bracing atmosphere. Their devious route lay along an extremely serpentine carriage road, that in winding around the base of the mountains, frequently doubled upon itself. At length, after a ride of four hours, they reached the remarkable circle of mountains that closed around, shut in and concealed the Cauldron and the Hall.

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The defile through this barrier of rocks was so deep, narrow, intricate and well concealed, that they might never have discovered the passage, but that their road led directly to its entrance. It was so difficult and dangerous that the whole party were compelled to alight from the cart, and Big Len had to lead the oxen through. And this passing occupied nearly an hour. And when they found themselves down in the vast hollow, all the party had to stop to recover breath and look at each other, before they could notice the singularity of the terrene deep in which they found themselves. Big Len, patting his oxen, spoke first—slowly and mildly, as he always spoke.

"Well, I never see sich a place before. 'Deed, Miss Ellen, it do mind me of a 'normous, grea' big bowl painted with gay colored flowers. Leas' ways it do look so to my ole eyes."

Old Len was right. Very gay and brilliant were the herbage and foliage in the hollow; winter reigned everywhere else—but he had not stormed this everlasting barrier and planted his standard in this sequestered deep—here nature still wore the gorgeous dress of autumn. The ground color—the dried grass—was of a rich golden bronze, and the forest trees were refulgent in crimson, yellow, purple, orange, and scarlet foliage. And deep in the midst of the hollow, in fine contrast to all this gorgeousness of coloring, stood the gray old Hall.

"It reminds me of the Garden of Eden, with the wall the Lord built around it," said Maud, glancing from the glorious deep to the mountain heights.

"It puts me in mind of Rasselas' Happy Valley," said Ellen, meditatively.

"And it makes *me* think," said Falconer, "of some impregnable castle and fortification of the old feudal times. Ghost of the Lion-hearted! what a place this would have been to hold against the enemy! I see a castle now where that old Hall stands, and men-at-arms and spears and banners and battle axes—and I stand upon the highest tower and see the besieging army outside, and know it never can get in."

"Hadn' de children better git in ag'in, Miss Ellen?" asked Big Len.

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"Yes—Falconer, help Sylvia in, and then lend me your hand."

They all took their seats in the cart, but Big Len preferred still to walk and guide the oxen. Their way to the Hall was a gradually descending road down a bronzed meadow. Ten minutes brought them to the gray, irregular front of the house. They alighted, left the ox cart standing, and went up the steps into the long piazza. And Ellen took the heavy bunch of keys from Big Len, and unlocked the front door, and they all entered the central hall. How dark and damp and musty it was! Not very cold, but more of a cellar temperature. Doors opened from this hall in every direction. Ellen tried the keys, and unlocked one on the right hand front, and entered a large dark parlor.

"Uncle Len, do go out and get an armfull of brush, and Falconer, get the tinder-box and matches from the wagon, we must have a fire here the first thing, that is certain," said Ellen, shivering and drawing her cloak around her.

Big Len went first to one of the front windows that were defended with those old time shutters that open inside, and withdrew the rusty grating belts, and folded them back, and let in a flood of sunshine upon the dark, damp room. Then he went out, and soon returned with a bundle of old dried boards, and an armfull of stubble. He looked up the chimney to be sure it was not too foul, and then made a great blazing fire that soon ameliorated the temperature of the apartment.

"And now, Uncle Len, bring in the hamper and the little tea-kettle from the cart, and I will make a cup of tea, and get a little dinner for these hungry children, while you go and unlock all the other rooms and build fires in the fire-places."

And the old man went out to do his mistress's bidding. And when he returned, Falconer took the tea-kettle, and went and filled it at the spring. And afterwards, while Ellen was preparing the little meal, and Big Len was opening all the doors and windows, and building fires in all the rooms, Falconer and Sylvia ranged all through the house. The furniture that had been left in the house was mostly of that substantial, en-

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during material and workmanship that is not easily injured by being left shut up in a deserted house for years.

"A little elbow grease," old Big Len said, "would soon brighten it up."

The boy and girl were deeply interested in their researches. In the course of their perigrinations, Sylvia opened the door of an octagon-shaped wainscoted parlor. The fire was already burning cheerfully on the hearth, and the window shutters were folded back, filling the room with sunlight. This had every evidence of having been a favorite sitting-room. And over the fire-place, filling all the space upon the wall between the mantel-piece and the ceiling, hung a half-length portrait of Mrs. Daniel Hunter, in all the joyousness of her beauty, before the touch of sorrow had softened and subdued it. There was the imperial form —the superb turn of neck and head—the clear, calm, olive cheek —the wealth of long, black, glossy ringlets—the dark, radiant eyes, full of serene majesty and sweetness. And the sunlight fell like a crowning glory upon this glorious head. And it attracted our child—it drew her with an irresistible power. She came forward slowly, with her eyes fixed upon the face, and stood before it, gazing breathless, spell-bound. Falconer came hurrying in behind her, but moderated his haste when he saw her standing so entranced, and came quietly and stood by her side, looking with her upon the portrait. But she never moved nor noticed his presence. And as her eyes remained fixed upon the beautiful face, she began to tremble, and a tide of emotion of some sort rushed over her countenance. Falconer took hold of her hand, asking cheerily,

"What's the matter, little sis? Does a beautiful picture make you feel so? Why, you are worse than I am."

"Oh, I don't know—I don't know," said Maud, speaking very low.

"It's Mrs. Daniel Hunter, I guess. Oh, yes, it must be, from the description I've heard of her."

"Yes, it *is* her, I know," breathed Maud, lowly.

"Well, what is it that you *don't* know?"



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"Oh, I don't know how I *knew* it was her, and why I love her so much, and why I feel so, *so* happy looking at her." And the tears rushed to the child's eyes, and rained down her cheeks.

"Oh! *I* can explain *that* to you, little sister. Of *course* you knew the portrait just as I knew it, by good guessing; and of course, you feel strange in looking at her living picture, for so do *I*."

"Do you?"

"Why certainly."

"But do you ever *dream* of her?"

"Why *no*, not that I know of. What a question! *Do you?*"

"I never dreamed of Mrs. Daniel Hunter to know who I was dreaming of. But, oh! that sweet lady, there," said Maud, gazing with perfect adoration on the beautiful face of the portrait.

"Well! that sweet lady there; what about her, Sylvia?"

"Oh, I've dreamed of *her!* Ever since I remember, I have dreamed of *her* just as her face looks now—so, *so* beauteous, so blessed—what shall I say—so like home, and peace and rest in Heaven."

"Did you ever see a face *clearly* in your dreams? I never did. And I reckon you only fancy all that! You've dreamed of beautiful ladies, of course, and you think they were like this one."

"No, no, no, no," said Maud, slowly, as if talking to herself. "No, it was this sweet lady—it was her blessed, *blessed* self. And when I look at her so, she seems alive. I feel near to her—and yet, far from her. And as I look now, I feel just as I do in my dreams—*so* strange, so happy, and so sorrowful at once. I can't tell you."

"You never told me such a dream before, as many dreams as you have told me in your life"

"Oh, I never *thought* of telling you. I only told you my *strange* dreams. But dreaming of the lady wasn't strange; I was *used* to it ever since I can remember."

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"*I* think it was the strangest dream of all—or I should think so, only I believe it was all fancy—the likeness I mean."

Ellen's voice was now heard calling the girl and boy, and they left the room; Maud very reluctantly, and casting many a "lingering look" behind.

In the afternoon, the children resumed their amusement of walking through the rooms and examining the furniture and the pictures. Maud had experienced a surprise in the forenoon. And Falconer was destined to receive a revelation in the afternoon. They had just thrown open the great door of the "long saloon," and Falconer led the way up its length. Big Len suddenly unclosed a window-shutter, and as suddenly the light blazed full upon a nobly executed full-length statue of Daniel Huuter, carved in white marble. The boy was arrested where he stood, and he remained standing with his arms folded, and his eyes rivetted to that fine work of art. Presently he slowly advanced and examined the statue, but with even more of reverence than of curiosity. Maud followed him and came to his side. He turned and laid his hand upon her head and gazed earnestly into her face, as he said,

"Little sister, this is what *I* have been dreaming of all my life without knowing it. Little one! I have read and heard of sculpture, but I never saw it before this. And now I do see it, little sister. I feel that *I too am a sculptor!*"

Yes! both children had found a key to their dreams—for both were dreamers, with this difference—Maud's was a dream of memory, Falconer's a dream of prophecy.

They slept that night in the lonely old house, Ellen and Maud occupying a well-aired, well dried bed-room, where fire had been kept burning all day long; and Falconer a small, comfortable chamber adjoining. Old Big Len preferred to pass the night on a mattress before the front parlor fire, "to keep guard," he said; though over what, or against whom, unless it might be the bats, the rats, and the owls, no one could tell.

Maud and Falconer enjoyed the novelty of their position very much, and, upon the whole, were very sorry when the hour approached for them to leave the old mansion-house.

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Ellen remained two days and nights, during which she had the old house thoroughly aired and dried. And on the third day she and her companions had a very pleasant ride home.

Her next care was to send Aunt Moll and Little Len with provisions, to stay at the Hall, and keep things in some sort of order until the arrival of Mr. Douglass and Miss Letty. In the course of a few days, wagons loaded with provisions reached the Hall in advance of the expected party. And in due time came the brother and sister, tired and worried enough with their winter journey through the bad roads; but happy in finding all things as comfortably prepared as circumstances would admit of for their reception.

Ellen did not go again to the Cauldron. But when Aunt Moll and Little Len came home again, they told her all she was interested in knowing—of the wonderful quantity of boxes, and the wagon loads of furniture that were constantly arriving at the Hall. And the terrible time the teamsters had in getting through the roads. And of the number of house carpenters, painters, paper-hangers and upholsterers, that were at work repairing and beautifying the house. And of the English landscape gardener and his assistants that were laying out the grounds. Everything, by their representation, looked just as if the owners were preparing the place to settle down in for time and eternity.

And so the month of February wore away.

Meantime, the works at the Summit were progressing rapidly.

The little Gothic church was nearly finished. It would certainly be ready for dedication by Easter. At least, Mr. Ipsy said so, and of course he had a right to be supposed to be well-informed upon the subject. Mr. Ipsy was certainly the busiest man, beyond all comparison, in Alleghany county. And the most important. His feet and eyebrows danced about from the Summit to the Hall, and from the Hall to the cottage, in the most miraculous manner. Mr. Bill Ipsy was certainly gifted with ubiquity.

And so passed the greater portion of March.

One day, near the last of the month, Mr. Ipsy suddenly made

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his appearance at Silver Creek cottage, in a state of the greatest possible excitement and importance. His feet danced about in the most incredible manner, and his eyebrows performed the most astonishing feats of legermain, jumping up and down, appearing and disappearing, and wriggling and twisting about with the swiftness of lightning and the gyrations of tortured leeches.

"He has come, madam, he has come!" was his first exclamation.

"*Who* has come, Mr. Ipsy?" asked Ellen, in disturbance.

"He has reached the Summit even now, madam!" exclaimed Mr. Ipsy, galvanizing his eyebrows.

"*Do* sit down, sir!" said Ellen, her nerves infected by his fidgets."

"I cannot, madam! I cannot stay! I only dropped in to tell you *he* has come!"

"*Who* has come?"

"DANIEL HUNTER!"

## CHAPTER XXV.

### THE RETURN OF THE FAMILY.

> And o'er that massive brow were wrought
> The intersected lines of thought;
> The furrows that the riving share
> Of care hath ploughed untimely there,
> Scars of the lacerating mind,
> Which the soul's war hath left behind.—*Byron.*

"WILL you rest now? Will you rest? Will you let this overwrought, toil-worn brain repose a little while?" murmured Augusta, softly passing her fingers over the great politician's corrugated brow.

It was the first evening after their arrival at Howlet Hall, and they occupied their favorite, wainscoted sitting-room. The furniture of this apartment had been purposely left unchanged, and

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the room preserved its old-fashioned, sober, slumberous air. It was cool, spring weather, and a fine wood fire was burning in the fire-place. Daniel Hunter sat before it in a large, stuffed, leather chair, that might have belonged to the last century. Augusta had entered, and came softly behind his chair, and was stooping over him until her ringlets lay upon his cheek, as with sweet, grave tenderness she smoothed his brow, and murmured,

"Will you rest now?"

He smiled gravely, put his hand behind him, and drew her around to a seat by his side and toyed with her ringlets, but in a thoughtful, abstracted manner; his mind was far away. The lady sighed and wondered what "question" had followed him to his hermitage to cheat him of his rest. Both are changed in these six years. Augusta's pale cheek is paler than ever, and her countenance has a calmer and profounder beauty. But the change that has passed over Daniel Hunter speaks of the fierce strife of political factions. His face is thinner and darker than before, and his great, ponderous forehead is, or seems greater than ever, by reason of the growing baldness of the upper portion, for his raven hair is falling off, and here and there a silver thread shines amid its darkness. Yet the countenance, if sadder, graver, and sterner, is also more majestic than ever before.

There are very few *real* patriots, and their life is no holiday, and their life's work no play. And their almost complete abnegation of social and domestic joys, their disinterested devotion, is a stern rebuke to the swarm of flippant, egotistical aspirants for political power and place, whose highest ambition is self-glorification. Of such was not Daniel Hunter, for whatever selfish vanity may do, it does not plough deep furrows in the cheek and brow, and turn a man's hair gray at forty-two.

The lady sat by his side, with her hand clasped in his, watching the profound thoughtfulness of that noble countenance, and then she inquired, softly,

"Now what is it? The French question—the sub-treasury bill—what is it that has pursued you even to this place, and will not let you rest?"

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He paused in his thoughts, and looked at her in the most perplexed, amused way, and then said,

"Why you are mixing up past questions and present questions in the most unaccountable manner, my love; bills that are dead and buried, and bills that are scarcely born. It was the French question that occupied me then. I confess I *cannot* at present see any way through the difficulty."

And Daniel Hunter went into a discussion of the one absorbing subject that had perplexed the House, the Senate, the Cabinet, and the President, for the whole of the preceding session, and had been left undecided at its close. Augusta let him talk on, in order to relieve his mind of its burden, but she did not tempt him to *dwell* upon the subject, by replying in any other way than by a sympathetic attention, a pressure of the hand that held hers, and a soft, mesmeric touch upon the wrinkled brows. Endowed with a high order of intellect, without many domestic ties—the childless wife of a great statesman—living in the very melee of political action—with every circumstance within and without to constitute her a female politician, Augusta conscientiously excluded politics from her thoughts and conversation. And for this reason. She felt that if she interested herself too deeply in this subject, her husband would too often discuss it with her. And she felt that when *politics* entered the door, *peace* flew out of the window. And she wished her home to be the place of forgetfulness and repose to the toil-worn statesman. There were never any words about this. She never refused to discuss any political question with him, but with matchless tact she drew him away from the fatiguing subject. Now when he paused, and seemed to expect her answer, she said to him,

"You know that nothing can be *done* in this matter before the next meeting of Congress, then why harass your mind with it? A problem that has racked the powers of Congress and the Cabinet for three months, is not likely to find its solution in the present exhausted state of your mind. Do not labor with it. Rest—rest—recover, and then in some healthful, hopeful, strong

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moment, the answer will come to you like a sudden inspiration."

As she said this she was passing her fingers lightly through his hair, and her eyes unconsciously fixed upon the silvery threads. He saw, or *felt* her look, and he smiled and said,

"No matter, love!—so that yours is not gray, it is no matter! *You* are my beautiful portion, Augusta, and your beauty I have indeed wished to see preserved."

She sought his eyes, and her own eyes filled with tears. Again he smiled,

"If a gray hair offend you, love, 'pluck it out and cast it from you.'"

But Augusta raised the lock and pressed it to her lips instead, murmuring,

"Not for the world. I would not remove one of them for the world. I love those few gray hairs. Daniel, they are eloquent of your life's greatness—they are sacred," and again she bowed her face and pressed the lock to her lips.

"I shall see them come with more philosophy than heretofore, dear," he answered, smiling.

They were silent for a while.

He was in danger of relapsing into the French question again.

She spoke—

"How calm it is here—what a deep peace—a profound stillness—what a contrast to the city streets—no rolling of carriages—no crowd, no confusion, and best of all, Daniel, no one will *ring the bell* to-night, and take you off to some political pow-wow, or come and sit out the whole evening, and talk of 'our foreign relations,' or 'our Indian frontier.' We need not even close our blinds, for there are no street passengers to peer in upon our seclusion. It is very refreshing, this consciousness of rest, freedom and privacy, do you not find it so?"

"Yes—yes," sighed the ex-secretary, with a sigh of deep appreciation. "I do find it so, my dearest, only the *habit* of brain work is difficult to break; and I find myself toiling as hard to-night as if I had a new measure to propose and to defend in a

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cabinet meeting to-morrow. But never mind, my dearest, in a day or two this habit will be broken, and I shall be as *degagé* as you could desire. Where is Honoria?"

"She is with her Aunt Letty, changing her dress," replied Augusta, touching the bell.

A servant answered the summons.

"Tell Miss Hunter that we are waiting for her," said the lady.

The servant bowed and withdrew, and in a few moments the door opened and Honoria entered. You could see at a moment's glance that this was a model boarding-school young lady—dress, air, and manner faultless and freezing. She was now eleven years old, but so well grown as to seem thirteen. She was called a beauty by superficial observers. She was tall and slender, with a small, graceful head, which she carried very erectly; delicate, regular, expressionless features; fair hair turned back from her low forehead, and plaited in a knot behind; fair blue eyes, calm and proud; and fair transparent skin, without color anywhere, except in the faint rose-tint of the thin lips. She was dressed in white muslin, with a light blue ribbon sash. And as Daniel Hunter looked at her and smiled, and opened his arms and held them out to receive her, one instinctively regretted that a great, rich heart like his should lavish the priceless treasure of its affection upon a pretty, empty chrysalis like her. She passed into his arms without emotion or warmth of any sort, and received all his caresses with cool passiveness. He seemed conscious of her coldness, yet appeared to love her none the less upon that account. His very pet names for her betrayed this. My "snow maiden," and "frostina," and "snow flake," and so on.

Honoria, with her thin, shallow, superficial nature, could not sympathize with or return his deep affection, any more than she could understand and appreciate the majesty of his character. Oh! she knew how to value his *rank*—she knew that he had been a United States Senator, a Secretary of State, a Governor of M——. She knew that he would probably be a candidate for the presidency, and she knew *her own* social value as his only daughter and heiress. Well had the world drilled *that* into the



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small head of the *soi disant* Miss Hunter. Yes! she knew how to value the *position*, but not the man that filled it—the *niche*, but not the statue—the *temple*, but not the demigod. And, reader, with her essentially vulgar mind, she had no more respect for Daniel Hunter, the self-made man, than if he had been born an earl! And now he drew her between his knees and embraced her with his left arm, while with his right hand under her chin, he lifted up the pretty lily-white face, and gazed upon it with a smile full of affection and interest. And modulating his voice to the softest, sweetest key, he questioned her concerning her studies, tastes, and pursuits—smiling tenderly at her insipid answers.

Truly this man was a fond lover of children, and his dazzled love transcendentalized this empty shell of a child into something very rich and lovely. To him her snowy skin, fair hair and eyes, and small, meaningless features, seemed the very perfection of delicate beauty. Her conceit seemed dignity; her insensibility, modesty; her insipidity, refinement; and her silliness, simplicity. When he asked her how she thought she should like the country, she replied, with a graceful, simpering toss—

"Not at all—there was no society."

When he inquired what she thought of their grand mountain scenery? she answered,

"It was *very coarse*, and littered about with mean, dirty-looking cabins."

"But," he said, "I will take my little daughter, when she is not tired and out of spirits, to ride among these rocks and waterfalls, and then she will be able to see the glory of the heavens and the earth."

But she did not care about riding out in the country. It was never worth while to dress for it even, because there was no one to see her, and, besides, there was nothing for her to see; no shops, no carriages, no ladies and gentlemen, nothing but those mean, dirty-looking cabins.

"But, my dear," he replied, sadly, "in those wretched cabins there are poor people who would gladly be more comfortable if

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they could—poor, half-starved men and women, who need work —poor, ignorant little children, who need instruction; and the great reason of my coming down into this neighborhood, is to try to improve their condition. I will take my little daughter into some of those cabins, and then she will feel more sympathy for their inmates—her tender little heart will be touched by their condition."

But Honoria did not wish to go at all; she was sure it would make her sick—wa'n't there poor-houses, if people could not be comfortable at home?

Whether something in this conversation gave him the first glimpse into the shallowness and selfishness of the little belle's heart or not, I cannot say; but true it is, that as he kissed her tenderly, and put her from him, he sighed, and fell into thought. And the manner of the young lady, as she gracefully settled her dress, and with her small head erect, walked across the rug and took her seat, was a piece of boarding-school perfection. Absorbed in political life as he had been, he had, in his few moments of relaxation, played with and loved this child, but had never penetrated her nature.

Augusta had; and whatever education could do had been done, and was still doing to make up the deficiencies of her character; but Augusta was constrained to confess to herself with sorrow, that nothing less than the severe discipline of life, tempered by the grace of God, could bring much good out of such hopeless material. Augusta never wondered at her husband's blindness to the imperfections of his pet—on the contrary, she understood it perfectly, and she remembered his tenderness and forbearance with herself, as long as she was a *child*—a toleration which ceased when she became a woman, and his interest in her was closer and deeper. And Augusta had hitherto been satisfied that he was not pained by seeing the faults so plain to every one else. But now the lady thought, as she saw him put the child from his arms, that his countenance wore an expression of disappointment. She was sorry for it. Honoria's *music*, at least, would not disappoint him. She arose and opened the cottage piano, and called Honoria to take a seat and sing for her father.

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And the little lady obeyed, in the most approved manner, asking papa if he would like to hear her sing Casta Diva?

Daniel Hunter looked around at her with a queer, quizzical smile, and asked her if she fancied herself equal to that?

And the little belle, with a graceful toss of her head, said that *he* must be the judge of that. He smiled, and bade her go on.

Now Honoria had most excellent singing mechanisms, her chest was round and expressive, her throat clear, her larynx flexible, and consequently her voice was a fine soprano. Of the moral and spiritual requisites for a fine singer, she had none whatever—but her *master* had a soul, and *she* had a perfect faculty of imitation, and gave to the Casta Diva all the expression that he had thrown into the wild, passionate, despairing invocation. And therefore severe as this test of her musical powers was, Honoria came through it successfully. None but the finest ear, the most delicate perception, could have felt the difference between the real and the sham sympathy with the passion of the song. Augusta felt all the difference. Daniel Hunter did not. He applauded the singer, but soon after turned to his wife, and said, in a low voice, that he did not think he should permit Honoria to go on with Italian music—that it was too impassioned, and that she sung it with too much feeling.

"Believe me, it will not injure her the least," replied the lady.

And she might have added—"she sings only as a mocking bird, or as a parrot."

The little singer closed the piano after this display, and resumed her seat by the fire.

And just then the door opened and Letty entered, and wanted to know why such a calm of silence had succeeded the storm of sound that had frightened all the bats and owls from their holes in the caves. They made room for her, and she seated herself among them, with her merry chat and quaint jests, driving away every shadow of a blue devil that presumed so much as to show its wing anywhere.

Letty has not changed at all since we saw her last. She has

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the same sparkling face—the same frolic spirit, the same wit and humor and drollery, though she has had one great trial and passed through it, and though she is twenty-six years old, and professes herself on the old maid's list. All her sisters and brothers, except Dug, are married, and she alone is left to wait upon her aged father and mother. The old couple still reside at the old town-house in A——. Harriet is the wife of a Virginia planter, and is annually adding *one* to the population of the State, and also winning prizes in the domestic department of the agricultural fair. Elizabeth is married to a southern judge, and is fulfilling her destiny as the great lady of a small village in the centre of Alabama. And Lucy, the flower of the flock, the family beauty, who was so confidently expected to draw a great prize in the world's matrimonial lottery—Lucy, after refusing a gray-haired captain in the navy, a dropsical senator, a gouty judge of the Supreme Court, and so forth, and after falling *in* love with a half-a-dozen different attachés, because they wore moustaches and waltzed well, and falling *out* of love with them, because they were fortune hunters, and would not commit themselves to a beauty without money like herself—Lucy is at last the companion of a worthy but poor young clergyman without a parish. They are at present staying with the old Hunters, while Letty remains at Howlet Hall. Their future is very unpromising, and they will certainly depend upon the old people for the very necessaries of life, unless Daniel Hunter prevents it. And Daniel Hunter will prevent it, for he has already appointed the young minister to the charge of his new church at the Summit. and he will secure him a liberal salary. And the Reverend William Lovel and his bride will be down in time for the dedication of the temple at Easter, after which Letty will return to her aged parents, and the young couple will take up their abode for the first year at least with the Hunters, at Howlet Hall. All these contemplated arrangements were discussed around the evening fire, until the entrance of a servant summoned the party to tea. And, after that slight refreshment was taken, being rather tired, they separated for the night.



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The next morning, after an early breakfast, Daniel Hunter ordered saddle horses, and he and Augusta rode up to the Summit to see the progress of the work. They found the church so nearly completed that little remained to do besides clearing it out. They returned home in very excellent spirits, and with a good appetite for their late dinner.

In the course of that week several of the country families called upon the Hunters—most respectable people they were, yet their plain country dress and manners highly offended Miss Honoria's fastidious taste.

"To think of ladies coming to make a call riding on mules instead of palfreys, and wearing straw bonnets and long calico skirts, instead of proper riding hats and habits! And to think of their taking off their things and staying to dinner, and when they were going away, saying, '*Do* come and spend a day with us, and bring all the family!' I wonder! Perhaps next time they come *they* will 'bring all the family,' negroes and dogs included! Really!"

"These are plain people, Miss Minx! without any airs and graces, or deceptions or debts, but with sound hearts and strong brains, and substantial acres," answered Letty, who never tolerated affectation.

"So are the Methodist ladies of our circle plain people, *very* plain people, but they don't make calls in soiled gloves and stained bonnet strings," persisted Miss, with a curling lip and nose. And she had the last word.

Mrs. Hunter's time had been so completely absorbed in organizing and regulating her new household, and in going to the Summit to superintend the interior fitting up and adornment of the church, that she had only found an opportunity to return the calls of her nearest neighbors. She had not been able to ride so far as Silver Creek to see Ellen, much as she desired to do so. But she had sent her love, and a message to Ellen, explaining the reason why she could not go to the cottage, and requesting her to come over to Howlet Hall. Ellen's heart beat wildly at the thought of going and seeing the daughter from whom she

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had been separated so long, and she wondered whether, after all, when they should meet, some sudden flash of association and memory might not light up all the past for Honoria, and restore her to her daughter's knowledge and affection. But dared she to hope? In justice to the Hunters, *ought* she to hope for such a denouement? At least she felt in honor bound to make no effort to awaken the early recollections of her child, nor, under all the circumstances, upon mature reflection, did she suppose there was the slightest danger, or even possibility of doing so. So Ellen accepted Mrs. Hunter's invitation, and prepared to make her visit. She went by the shortest route, the bridle path, and therefore took neither of the children with her, but only Little Len, mounted on a plough horse, as her attendant. Ellen employed herself during the whole ride in trying to steady and strengthen her nerves for the interview with her daughter, lest her agitation might excite the surprise and curiosity of the latter, and lead to embarrassing inquiries. A brisk ride of two hours brought her to Howlet Hall, where she was received most affectionately by Mrs. Hunter, who took her at once into the sitting-room, where Miss Honoria, in her morning-dress of white muslin, sat at the piano practicing her Italian music. The young lady arose with her usual dignity to receive a new visitor. Ellen looked at her, a dainty, delicate, dignified little lady, and a strange pang shot through her heart.

"Honoria, this is Mrs. O'Leary, a dear friend of ours, whom I hope you will love for her own sake, as well as ours," said Mrs. Hunter.

And before the little belle could make her formal courtesy, Ellen clasped her in her arms and burst into tears. Mrs. Hunter sat down, calmly waiting the issue. But Miss Honoria withdrew herself with an offended air, and resumed her seat. Mrs. Hunter instantly arose again, took Ellen's hand, and pressing it affectionately, led her to a seat upon the sofa. Ellen recovered herself and was the first to speak—albeit in a broken, faltering voice:

"You must please to excuse me, Miss Honoria, I knew your

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father well and loved him. I love Mrs. Hunter also—and—when I saw you, I—"

"Pray do do not mention it, madam. You are very good, and I am very much flattered, I am sure," said Miss, haughtily, as she adjusted her slightly disordered dress.

Ellen was cut to the heart—poor Ellen did not recollect that at Honoria's age, she, herself, was just such an insolent, affected piece of egotism and conceit. Mrs. Hunter rang the bell and ordered cake and wine brought, and when her guest had taken some refreshment, the lady bade Honoria sit down to the piano and sing for them. And the young lady, never unwilling to display her musical powers, complied very gracefully, and sang several sweet songs, to the delight of Ellen. Soon after this dinner was announced. At the dinner-table, Ellen met Daniel Hunter and Miss Letitia, both of whom received her with great cordiality. Early in the afternoon, Ellen prepared to take leave, resisting all Mrs. Hunter's persuasions to stay, by saying that the little girl, Sylvia, was not quite well, and that she feared to leave her alone all night. Therefore Ellen bade them all good-bye, imprinted a passionate kiss upon the haughty, unwilling lips of Miss Honoria—received a warm, affectionate one from Mrs. Hunter, and so departed.

"I really do think mamma is collecting the most comical set of people around her!" exclaimed Miss Honoria, throwing herself back upon the lounge with the most extremely fashionable air of ennui and fastidiousness. There was no one in the sitting-room but Letty.

"What do you mean?" she inquired, coolly.

"Why, that Irish person."

"What Irish person?"

"Why, that O'Leary woman, to be sure."

"She is not an Irish woman. She is an American lady."

"*Is she?* Think of her falling to kissing and crying over me, because she knew my parents, or somebody else's parents or something. I forget what. Now I think *that* was *very* Irish."

"Honoria! I declare it shocks me to hear you speak so dis-

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respectfully of people who sit at your father's table, and especially of Mrs. O'Leary, who is a lady, and has been very unhappy. You ought to respect and love her, because—because—because she is *worthy*, and we all esteem her."

"I should like to accommodate you in this matter, Aunt Letty, but you perceive I can't—the O'Leary woman puts unpleasant thoughts into my head."

"How, I pray you?"

"Oh, I don't know, but she *does* somehow! It's very droll, but the longer she staid here, and the more I looked at her, the more she made me think of narrow, filthy city streets, and fetid gutters, and squalid, miserable houses, and cold, and hunger, and illness."

"What do you say, Honoria?" asked Letty, in alarm.

"Well, it is just *so*, Aunt Letty, explain it who can; but she *does*—she reminds me just of those remote back streets and wretched tenements in Washington city, where you used to take me, so much against my will, to see the sick beggars."

"Pooh; what an idea! How should she remind you of them, when she never was in Washington city, in her life! Nonsense!" said Letty, with increasing anxiety.

"Of course it is nonsense—but nevertheless, it is very *droll* that the O'Leary woman *should* force me to think of starvation, and fever, and pauperism."

"Now, how very silly that is! How should *she* remind you of pauperism? She is very comfortably off—she has a nice farm in this neighborhood—pooh!" exclaimed Letty, fidgeting.

"It's no use, Aunt Letty! I tell you that O'Leary person is inextricably connected, in my mind, with rags and squalor!"

"There's your mother's bell, thank goodness! Go along up and recite your German lesson," said Letty, putting an abrupt end to the dangerous conversation—for she perceived, with alarm, that the whole train of early recollections was in peril of being started by the power of association in the young girl's mind.

But very soon other subjects engaged Honoria's thoughts.

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The family were preparing to receive the newly married pair, Mr. and Mrs. Lovel. And one lovely afternoon in April, when the trees were all budding out in young leaves and blossoms, and the peach and the cherry trees in full bloom, made a forest of flowers around the house, and the hyacinths and heart's-ease, and early roses, were wafting the incense of their fragrance from the garden, and the sky was clear, and the air soft, and the birds, awakened refreshed from their noon-day slumber, were out in full song—on such an evening the bride and groom arrived; and there were kisses, and congratulations, and inquiries, and gentle attentions, and nursing tenderness, until they were refreshed from their journey, and comfortably installed in the parlor. The young couple were a pretty, innocent looking pair of turtle-doves enough; a very nice match, some people said, because, forsooth, both were fair-haired, and fair-skinned, and both about the same height; Mr. Lovel having the advantage only of an inch or so in *this* respect. Though in every other respect of moral, mental, and Christian worth, Mr. Lovel was greatly the superior of his pretty, gentle, frivolous wife—else had not Daniel Hunter called him to the pastoral care of his new church.

As birds of a feather flock together—and as Mrs. Lovel and Miss Honoria had several points of attraction, it followed, as a matter of course, that they became great friends. And Miss Honoria, though by no means gifted with the genius of satire, drew for Mrs. Lovel what she supposed to be good caricature sketches of "the comical set of people" mamma was collecting about her, and who she supposed would be the staple of Mr. Lovel's congregation, and of their own "society." There was no lady, and but one gentleman, that she had seen since she came to the neighborhood—the gentleman was Mr. Ipsy; perfectly comme-il-faut in dress and address, except—yes! he, *too*, was "comical" in one particular; he had a twitching of the eyebrows, which she supposed was a nervous disorder that he could not help. It was only when they were *alone*, that these two ventured to indulge their contempt for their country neighbors.

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In the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, or Mr. Lovel, or even honest Letty, they would not have dared to do so. And so the days passed, and Easter Sunday approached. And they were making preparations for the festival, and also for the reception of the Bishop of M——, who was to solemnize the rites of dedication.

On Thursday before Easter, the younger members of the family arose very early. When they had gathered around the breakfast-table, in that pleasant room that opened on the lawn, the garden and the orchard, and let in the view of the peach and apple blossoms, and the fragrance of flowers, and the songs of birds—

"Letty!" said Mrs. Lovel, "do you know what day this is?"

"Why, Holy Thursday, of course."

"But do you know what anniversary?"

"No, I've forgotten; let me see; yes I do! Eleven years ago to-day, brother Daniel was first elected Governor of M——."

"Do you remember the enthusiasm. My! I shall never forget it!" said the pretty bride, cooling her tea.

"How old was *I* then, mamma? Dear me! I could not have been six months old," put in Honoria.

But the sudden silence and soberness that followed her question, checked the little lady; she understood that for some reason her question was inopportune. And Mrs. Hunter turned the conversation.

In the afternoon of that day, Bishop S—— arrived at the Hall, and was received with the utmost respect and cordiality. But the countenance of the venerable prelate was overcast, gloomy and foreboding. Kind and gentle in his manners, he sought to throw off the shadow from his brow and spirits, but in vain; and after dinner he requested an interview with Mr. Hunter. His host conducted him into the library, and they sat down on opposite sides of a small writing-table, the Bishop with an ominous sigh and groan, Daniel Hunter in quiet expectancy.

"Does your memory serve you to recall the last occasion upon which we met, Mr. Hunter?" inquired Bishop S——.

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Daniel Hunter reflected a moment, and then answered,

"Certainly, sir! It was upon the occasion of your calling, in company with several other gentlemen, at the executive chamber in A——, with a petition for the reprieve of William O'Leary, convicted of the murder of Burke."

"Yes, sir; and, Mr. Hunter, it is eleven years to-night since you refused to grant our petition for the reprieve of that man."

"To what end, reverend sir, is that painful event recalled?"

"To the end, Mr. Hunter, *I* fear, that you may regret your refusal more than you ever regretted any act of your life."

"Be good enough to explain yourself, Bishop S——."

"Heaven be pitiful, Daniel Hunter, so I will. But when you have heard—listen, then. It is not two weeks since I was called to the death-bed of a man of the highest social position, who confessed, in the presence of myself and the Mayor of A——, that he was guilty of the murder of Burke, and that he was dying of remorse. He had killed Burke to avenge an insult offered to his sister; he had escaped and gone abroad instantly after the deed, and after remaining in France several years, had only recently returned to find out that an innocent man had been executed for his crime. His deposition was taken down, and he died in ten minutes after signing it."

Daniel Hunter was not a man to start or ejaculate. He heard this terrible annunciation, and lifted up his head, and his strong, massive face seemed turned to marble—and,

"God be merciful to human error!" he exclaimed, "for if the convict had been my own son, I would have done as I did."

The venerable Bishop arose, took his hand with great respect, pressed it, and said,

"I firmly believe *that*, Mr. Hunter! I *know* it. There is not a friend, no, nor an *enemy*, you have in the world, who does not know and feel that Daniel Hunter, had his own son been the supposed criminal, would not have interfered to save him from the justly offended majesty of the law. But, Mr. Hunter, my honored friend, it behooves us both to look seriously into this matter; me, because, humble and unworthy as I am, I am

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one of God's messengers to man; and you, especially, Daniel Hunter, because you exercise a mighty influence upon the age in which we live, and consequently upon the coming destiny of the world. Here has been a grevious, a tremendous wrong done. A young man, amiable, innocent, exemplary in all the relations of life, is charged with a crime he has never committed—he is overwhelmed by circumstantial evidence—he endures all the torture, suspense, shame and anguish of a long imprisonment, a terrible trial, and a public death! I repeat there has been an awful wrong done! *Who* is the wrong-doer or the wrong-doers? Not the judge and jury who convicted him! for they went by the law and the testimony, and with the evidence before them they could do no otherwise than condemn him! not the Governor, for it was his duty to see the laws carried into effect! Who then? Daniel Hunter, I ask you, as a law-maker, a leader among men and nations, upon whose head or heads has fallen the innocent blood of this young man?"

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE FIRST MEETING OF THE MOTHER AND CHILD.

Thou must have been most lovely from thy birth—
Of glorious parents, thou aspiring child!
I question not of one who left the earth,
Whose death was like a setting planet mild,
Which clothed thee in the radiance undefiled
Of its departing glory.

In the meantime, at the Silver Creek farm-house, little Maud lay very ill. Ellen, on returning from Howlet Hall, had found her in a high fever, and had sent off to the Summit for the doctor. Her illness was pronounced to be a congestive fever, threatening the brain. And all the family vied with each other in devoted, though profoundly quiet attentions to the gentle



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little patient. Ellen watched by her bedside day and night, scarcely allowing herself an hour's needful rest in the twenty-four. Old Abishag forgot to swear, and prayed instead. And Falconer learned a lighter step and softer tone when he entered her sick-room.

And Maud, in her fevered dreams, babbled sweetly of a beautiful lady, that led her by the hand through green and shady woods and lawns, and who gave her cold, sparkling water from fresh fountains when she was thirsty, and sat down and took her upon her lap, and laid her tired head upon her soft bosom when she was exhausted. And sometimes this lady was her mother, come from heaven to visit her—and sometimes she was Mrs. Hunter, whose portrait hung above the mantel-piece at Howlet Hall.

As Ellen watched, alone, beside her, in the darkness of the night, and saw her stretch her feeble arms, and her countenance irradiate with joy, to welcome the vision of the sweet lady—so *real* seemed this vision to the sick child, that Ellen cowered with awe, and crossed herself, and uttered the Ave Maria, for she thought it was an apparition of the blessed Madonna.

And Falconer, when he heard the child babbling in the day-time of the lovely lady's smiles and tones—understood her visions—but somehow, even to him, they were invested with a sacred mystery that awed him into silence. Therefore he never spoke of her previous dreams to his mother.

At last the crisis of Maud's illness passed. The fever waned, and with it faded the bright vision of the lady. And Maud's thoughts returned to healthful, ordinary life.

Mr. Bill Ipsy came over to see the little convalescent, and brought her some oranges and some fine apples, and sat by her bed and told her of the beautiful new church that was all ready for dedication at Easter, and the new Sunday-school that was to be opened the same day. He himself was to be the superintendent, he said; and Mrs. Daniel Hunter and Mrs. Lovel, the pretty wife of the young minister, and one or two other ladies of the county, were to be the teachers of the classes.

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Maud listened with lively interest, and in her eagerness to ask and hear more, sat up in bed, exclaiming, occasionally,

"Oh! I wish I might go—I wish I might go!" And then—"But never mind! Ellen and Falconer can go and see the dedication, and Falconer can go to the Sunday-school, too, if he wishes—I think he is too far advanced for a pupil, but he might be a teacher for the smallest boys."

And the light shone so brightly in her eyes, and the color flushed so warmly in her cheeks, that Ellen feared the effect of the excitement upon her, and therefore called Mr. Ipsy into the parlor, where she had the tea-table prepared.

After this visit little Maud improved in health daily. She was very anxious to go and see the church dedicated, and could talk of nothing else.

Falconer had also set his mind upon seeing this solemnity—for it was in fact a very great event in a secluded country neighborhood.

Ellen heard all this conversation between the children with uneasiness. Ellen was a Catholic—though not a bigoted one—for, although her father had been of the same sect, her mother and many of her near relations were Episcopalians. And because she was a Catholic, Ellen made some little opposition to the children's wishes. And because she was not bigoted, her opposition was finally withdrawn.

On Thursday before Easter, Maud sat up, for the first time since her illness. On Friday she came into the parlor, and on Saturday she went out into the little yard before the cottage, and cleared the last winter's dry leaves from around the roots of the budding hyacinths, jonquils and daffodills—and even scrambled down the rocks to the edge of the creek, to watch the young trout gliding through the water, and sometimes flashing above its surface. So much better was Maud that day, and so anxious was she to go and see the dedication of the church, that Falconer set to work to persuade his mother to allow her to do so.

He said Sylvia had never seen anything like that before, and never would have another chance. That he could gear up

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the little donkey cart, and fix an easy seat in it for Sylvia—and that when he got her to church, he could put her in a pew in the corner where she could lean back and rest.

And Maud's pleading eyes silently joined in the entreaty.

And Ellen, easily overruled by her children, at last assented.

Easter Sunday dawned—a lovely spring day, the morning sparkling in sun-lit showers, that soon cleared off, leaving Nature all the brighter and fresher, with rain-drops glistening on every green tree, and bush and blooming flower. They had an early breakfast, and set off soon after sunrise. Ellen, Falconer, and Maud in the cart, and Big Len driving, and old Abishag and Aunt Moll both seated on the plough horse, riding behind. If you had seen them, you would have wondered at the strength of that steed's back-bone, that it did not snap under the double weight—especially as great, fat Aunt Moll weighed, I am afraid to say how many stone. Last of all, Little Len brought up the rear, walking. The house was left to take care of itself; for, of course, everybody must go to see the solemnity never seen by them before, and never to be seen again. All were in their Sunday's best.

Old Abishag's black satin bonnet fairly glistened in the brightness of the morning light. Aunt Abishag evidently thought she would be doing great honor to the parish, by being present at the ceremony of the dedication—an honor which she felt conscientiously constrained to qualify, by asserting that, "for all that she didn't b'lieve in Positive Pistolly Church any more than she did in any other; she b'lieved in the Methody deciety *her*self."

It was a beautiful road, through a long, narrow, wooded valley, between two lofty ridges of mountains, for about two miles, and then an easy circuitous ascent to the fine table-land of the Summit—a beautiful village, commanding a most magnificent prospect of the whole surrounding country. In the midst of it all stood the new church—a fine Gothic edifice of red sandstone, with its tall spire pointing to the heavens, and relieved against the dark blue sky. The village was full of strangers, and the

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space around the church-yard encumbered by carriages, donkey-carts, saddle-horses, mules, and every possible description of "conveyance," and more were continually arriving. Ellen pointed out to Falconer the plain, dark-brown family carriage of Daniel Hunter, but it was empty—the family were already in church.

And little Maud was so tired, that she was lifted out of the cart, and led in between Ellen and Falconer.

Mr. Bill Ipsy happened to be near the door, and to spy his favorites, and he immediately got up and conducted them to a pew in the upper end of the church, on the left hand side of the pulpit. They gave Maud the corner seat, and she sat back and rested herself. She was very pale with fatigue.

The church was two-thirds filled, and the people were still pouring quietly in at the two doors, and slowly filing off to their seats.

Opposite to our party, on the right hand side of the pulpit, in the front pew, sat Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, Miss Letty, Honoria, and Mrs. Lovel. Daniel Hunter and Augusta sat rather under the shadow of the pulpit, but Miss Honoria and Mrs. Lovel were in full view. Falconer stooped down to indicate them to his sister.

"Where is Mrs. Hunter?" whispered Maud.

"You cannot see her—she sits in the upper end of the pew, and the pulpit hides her."

Maud turned her head, looked, and found she could not, and feared she was rude, and fell back in her corner again.

Soon, however, Falconer stooped to whisper—he was a boy, and could not help it.

"You see that pretty, fair-skinned, blue-eyed lady, in the white crape bonnet, and white lace scarf?"

Maud nodded, to avoid whispering.

"Well, that is Mrs. Lovel, the minister's bride."

Maud looked as if she thought the bride very pretty. Falconer went on.

"And that dainty, tossy little lady next to her—stop, you



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can't see her well from where you sit—she is Miss Honoria Hunter, the only child and heiress of—"

Falconer stopped abruptly, for Maud had laid her hand meaningly on his arm, and so called his attention to what was passing around them. The church was suddenly still. The bishop and his attendants were coming up the central aisle. They reached the enclosure round the altar, and entered; and, with reverent step and slow, ascended the pulpit. And after a pause, and a silent prayer, the reverend prelate proceeded to commence the solemn ceremonies of the day.

I will spare the description of a rite with which all are familiar. The ensuing sermon was preached by the young pastor, from a text well chosen for the occasion:—"The hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet in Jerusalem worship the Father.

"The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth—for the Father seeketh such to worship Him."

The discourse was earnest, fervent, and impressive. The minister possessed that rare quality of at once satisfying the educated intellect of learned men, and the simple minds of the ignorant and the little children. Mr. Lovel at once found favor in the eyes of great and small. And at the close of the services, many of the congregation pressed around Daniel Hunter to obtain an introduction to the bishop, and to the young pastor.

Ellen and her little party modestly hung back until the press of the crowd was past, before they left their pew.

Maud watched to catch a glimpse of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter. The form of the great statesman was prominent enough above the crowd, and Maud's shy gaze was full of awe. But the sweet lady that hung upon his arm had her face turned away, and partially shaded by the ample fall of a black lace-veil. Maud could not see her countenance, and with an unconscious sigh of disappointment, the little girl suffered herself to be led out by Falconer.

Ellen would willingly have stopped to speak to Mrs. Hunter,

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and to touch Honoria's hand again—but the lady was surrounded by a circle through which Ellen did not feel inclined to break.

So the little family passed out, re-entered their donkey-cart—and followed as before by old Abishag and Aunt Moll on the plough-horse, and Little Len on foot, took up their line of march homeward.

As they went onward, Falconer was enthusiastic in his praises of the young pastor—calling on his mother and Maud and the colored folks, to bear him witness in his panegyrics.

Maud said she loved the good minister.

Ellen admitted that she had never heard a better sermon—but regretted that the talents of the young man should be lost, and worse than lost to the *true* church—what a priest he would have made!

And old Abishag whipped up her horse and came alongside of the cart to say,

"It wa'n't no use—that young man was too good for a Positive Pistolly—he ought a' been a Methody—" and *checked* herself when about to seal her asseveration with an oath.

And Maud thought *what remained unsaid*—was the best compliment yet to the preacher.

They reached home to a late dinner, and spent all the afternoon in talking of the new church, the preacher, the congregation, and the Sunday-school.

In the course of the next week, Mr. Ipsy called at the cottage to know if the children were not to be allowed to go to Sunday-school. The children were very anxious to go—and their entreaties, joined to Mr. Ipsy's arguments, and Ellen's secret inclination to oblige Mrs. Hunter, prevailed over her scruples, and she consented, saying to herself, (though she afterwards confessed it as a sin,) that there was no other church or school in the neighborhood—that the Protestant Church was better than none at all, and that the sect which had produced Mrs. Hunter, could not be so very far wrong.

So the next Sunday, very early in the morning, Falconer and Maud got ready, ate a slight hasty breakfast, and set out together

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to walk to the Summit. By the foot-path the distance was short. It was a lovely May morning, and Falconer and Maud had a delightful walk. They reached the Summit, and entered the church. The sexton conducted them up stairs into the spacious gallery, in which the Sunday-school was kept. Here, dispersed about in the gallery pews, were about a half dozen of teachers, each with some eight or twelve pupils collected around her. Among the teachers were Mrs. Daniel Hunter and Mrs. Lovel.

Mrs. Hunter had a large sized square pew beside the great organ. There were about a dozen little girls around her. The black lace veil was thrown back, and the lady's beautiful face was unshaded, save by the drooping black ringlets.

Mr. Ipsy, as superintendent, stood before a large desk in the corner, doing something with a pen and ink, and lightly kicking his neat boot toes together, and twinkling his eyes and eyebrows, and every little while sticking the pen behing his ear, and flying off at a tangent to hand a book to some pupil, or to speak a word to some teacher.

Our girl and boy were evidently rather late. The morning prayers were over, and the exercises of the school commenced. So Mr. Ipsy told them, when Falconer walked up to his desk, made his bow, and presented his little sister. Nevertheless, Mr. Ipsy took a New Testament out of his desk, and opened it and handed it to Maud, and told her to read for him, that he might test her abilities, and know in what class to place her.

Maud read well and fluently, though in a low voice, and with a blushing cheek. And Mr. Ipsy was satisfied, and took the book from her hands, and said he must put her in Miss Spooner's Testament class.

"But, if you please, sir, I want to go in *that* lady's class," said Maud, timidly, indicating Mrs. Daniel Hunter.

Mr. Ipsy's eyebrows flew up in surprise, then puckered down in a frown.

"What, what, what; what do you say? What lady?" he asked, quickly and nervously.

"Mrs. Hunter, sir, if you please."

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"Eh? What? My conscious! Little girls are not to choose what class they are to go into."

"But, sir, if you please, I came here to go into Mrs. Hunter's class," persisted Maud, gently, letting her eyes linger on the form of the lady.

"Oh! pooh, pooh, pooh! tut, tut, tut! Mrs. Daniel Hunter cannot be plagued with you! Come, come! Let's go to Miss Spooner's class," said Mr. Ipsy, his eyebrows executing the most incredible fandangoes, as he surveyed the little girl from head to foot.

The fact was, Mr. Ipsy did not think Maud quite "genteel" enough to be put near Mrs. Hunter. Mr. Ipsy, in distributing the pupils among the teachers, had acted solely upon his own responsibility. And he had thought he was exercising the very soundest discretion in selecting the prettiest and best dressed children for Mrs. Hunter's class. And it was with perfect satisfaction that he now surveyed the lady seated—by his management—in a bevy of white robed little fairies. And it was with much irritation that he heard little Maud urge her petition to be put in "that lady's class." Maud, still in her winter's dress, a gown of dark brown stuff, and a hood of dark blue silk. It is true that the face within that hood was a face of heavenly beauty—and the long, glorious ringlets that hung down to her waist, was a richer, rarer mantle than any in the school—but still that was only nature's adornment, and would not prevent Maud's dark winter garment making a discord in the cloud of white muslin, lace, and artificial flowers, with which he had taken care to surround Mrs. Hunter. So Mr. Ipsy's eyebrows fairly danced a jig while he gazed at the child and pooh-poohed her wishes off, and said she must go to Miss Spooner's class. But Maud's eyes were beseechingly fixed upon Mrs. Hunter, and she said once more,

"Pray, sir, do let me go into Mrs. Hunter's class, and I will learn so well."

It happened that these words caught Mrs. Hunter's ear, and she looked up, saw the child, and beckoned Mr. Ipsy. Mr. Ipsy sprang to her bidding "like Xyphia's to his aim."

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"What is it, Mr. Ipsy?" she asked.

"Why, madam, that little troublesome child has taken a fancy to go into your class, and no other. Really it is very natural that she should feel this preference, which, I fancy, is shared by all the pupils in the school—they would all, doubtless, prefer the honor of Mrs. Hunter's invaluable instructions, but, really, all cannot have it."

"But since this little one alone asks it, is i not fair to presume that she alone desires to be in my class? And why may she not come?"

"Madam—a—your compliment is filled up."

"I can take another. I will take *her* with pleasure, Mr. Ipsy."

"But, madam, really—this little girl—I." He paused in embarrassment.

Mrs. Hunter relieved him by saying,

"You are the superintendent of the school, Mr. Ipsy, and if you see a proper cause to refuse my request, I withdraw it of course—deferring to your—position."

"Madam—Mrs. Hunter—most certainly it is I who am honored in submitting to your better judgment. I will go and bring the little girl to you," said Mr. Ipsy, dancing back to Maud, to whom he glibly said, "Mrs. Hunter is so good as to say she will take you, Miss."

"Oh! I *knew* she would. I *knew* she would," said the child to herself, with a look of earnest, deep thanksgiving.

And Mr. Ipsy took her hand and led her up to the pew door. Mrs. Hunter was bending over a book with one of her pupils.

"Here is your new pupil, madam," said the superintendent.

And Mrs. Hunter lifted up her beautiful countenance and looked upon the little girl.

And the long severed mother and child were face to face.

Their eyes met. Maud dropped hers as in the presence of some holy angel, and the lady, as she gazed upon the supernal beauty of the child, felt a thrill pass through her heart. She took the little one by the hand—there was a comfort in clasping

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that soft little hand in her own—she drew the child in, and placed her beside her. The delicate white muslin on the other side shrunk away from the contact of the brown stuff—but the lady looked sweetly down upon the little girl, and still clasping her small hand, asked gently,

"What is your name, love?"

"Sylvia Grove," answered the child.

"I remember that name. You are Mrs. O'Leary's little girl?"

"Yes, ma'am, but not her daughter—my dear mother was lost at sea—but she is good to me as she can be, and I love her dearly."

The eyes of the lady lingered upon the sweet, grave face of the child. She felt strange interest in her words—she would fain have asked her, "Do you remember your lost mother, love?"—her thoughts formed the question—but that was not the time or place for conversation irrelevant to the purpose that brought them together.

And, moreover, Mr. Bill Ipsy, who had fluttered away to his desk, now fluttered back with Mrs. Hunter's class register, to which had been added at the bottom of the list, the name of "Sylvia Grove." He handed the register to the lady, and placed in the hands of Maud a New Testament and a hymn book, and bowed and gyrated off in some other direction.

Now, if anybody objects to such fandangoes in the superintendent of a Sunday-school, I have to assure such a caviller that it was only a constitutional, nervous excitement, purely physical, quite unaffected, and which, I think, he could not help, for I knew Mr. Bill Ipsy intimately, and, barring a little too much deference to rank, and youth and beauty, I never knew a better man.

Mrs. Hunter took the Testament and hymn book from the hands of Maud, and saying,

"You are too late to learn any lessons this morning, love, it is half-past ten o'clock, and they are about to dismiss the school, so I can only set you lessons to be learned for the next Sabbath—" she marked the second chapter of Matthew, and gave it to the

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little girl, asking, "Do you think you can commit all this to memory by next Sabbath, love?"

"Oh, yes, ma'am, I will learn it well by heart for next Sunday."

They said no more then, for at that moment the young minister appeared in front of the rails, before the organ, to close the exercises of the school. In an instant all were silent. A short exhortation, a prayer, a hymn, and the benediction followed, and then the children were dismissed. The pupils, who had neither parents nor guardians with pews below stairs, remained in the gallery, under the charge of the superintendent.

Mrs. Hunter arose to go.

"Have you a seat down stairs, love?" she inquired of Maud, who had lingered behind all her classmates.

"Yes, ma'am, Falconer will take me to it."

"Why do you stop then, little one?"

"I wanted to stay as long as you did, ma'am."

"Well, I am going now, love, so good-bye," said Mrs. Hunter, pressing the little soft hand; but Maud's face was raised to hers with a look of such wistful, trusting love and veneration, that the lady suddenly stooped down and kissed her—once—twice—again—she could not help it! She pressed the child to her bosom, and then with slow self-recollection, released her, saying—"Good-bye, love. You are a sweet, sweet child. I know you are a good child. Good-bye, love," and dismissed her.

It was well that the lady and the child had been alone—it was well that all the little gossamer girls were gone to their mammas—and that there were none to see and wonder at that fondness, and accuse their teacher of "showing favor."

Maud left the pew with her hands unconsciously folded over her bosom, as if to keep safe some sweet, sacred happiness deposited there.

Falconer was waiting for her at the foot of the stairs.

"They have put me in the first Bible class—in Mr. Lovel's own class," he said, and asked—

"Don't you think, Sylvia, that our minister is a very hard

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working man?—to preach twice Sunday, and teach a Bible class besides? What are you thinking of, little chicken? Why don't you answer me?"

"What did you say, Falconer?"

"Don't you think Mr. Lovel a very devoted hard working minister, to attend to the church and the Sunday-school both?"

"I don't know whether that is hard work or not, but I know he is a good man, and I like him," said Maud, in a low voice.

This conversation brought them into the church, and as Ellen was not with them, they found an humble seat at the low end of the building. Maud was in a blessed reverie—the lady's kisses and embraces had made her so happy—it seemed to her as if her dreams were coming true—as if the angel of her visions was embodied before her. On their walk home she said nothing about it to Falconer—when they reached the cottage she said nothing of it to Ellen—she never meant to name it to a living soul. An instinctive silence closed her lips. She could not have explained *why*, but, in truth, it seemed a joy to be treasured—not talked about. And all that week all her thoughts were occupied in looking forward to and preparing for the next Sunday.

In the course of the week Daniel Hunter paid Ellen a visit, to make known to her the important discovery communicated to himself by the Bishop. Never in the course of his life, perhaps, had a more painful duty devolved upon the great politician. But Daniel Hunter discharged it most worthily. The revelation did not surprise Ellen the least—it agitated her dreadfully, as all allusion to that darkest tragedy ever did. When Mr. Hunter had imparted all that he knew of that most deplorable matter, Ellen replied,

"We always knew Willie's innocence, sir, and we always hoped it would be found out. He was a martyr, sir—his death was a ghastly legal murder. Sir, I have heard it taught that a consciousness of innocence would bear one up through persecution and death. I know not how that can be, for it was his consciousness of innocence that made his death so very bitter to him—it was our faith in his innocence that made his death so very



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bitter to us—for with him and us, the galling sense of injustice was added to all the other suffering. I know not how much guilt may add to sorrow, for I am not in the confidence of guilty breasts."

Daniel Hunter was standing with his fine head uncovered before her. He took her hand respectfully, and said,

"Mrs. O'Leary, you must not look upon me as the executioner of your husband—a young man whom I found ordered for death the day upon which I came into office. With the law and the testimony before me, I could not interfere to save him. How much I regretted my inability *then*—how much more I regret it *now*, is known only to God. We will not talk of the past! 'It comes not back again.' We will talk of the future. Ellen! I desire to make reparation as far as I can for what you have suffered. You have a fine boy—will you allow me to educate him—to send him to college, and establish him in business or a profession?" He paused for her answer.

But Ellen withdrew her hand, and covered up her face and wept.

He waited patiently until she wiped her eyes, and lifted up her face and replied,

"Sir, I am disposed to be grateful to you, and to accept your kind offers for my son, but compunction struggles against gratitude, sir. I do not know whether it is right to feel grateful—whether it is right to take any favor from you—whether it would not be treason to him who is gone—and whether, indeed, your patronage would not be like the high priest's thirty pieces of silver—the price of blood—unblessing and unblessed! Sir, I seldom speak so plainly, but to-day I cannot help it"

"Mrs. O'Leary, I am neither surprised nor displeased that you should speak so. I will leave you for the present. When you have had time to reflect, and, above all, to pray, you will probably view this matter with clearer mental vision. And remember that my offer holds good from this time forth. I will bid you good morning."

His noble face was full of sorrow as he pressed her hand, and turned to leave the house.

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In the flower-yard stood Maud, gathering a bunch of flowers. The child recognized the great man, and looked up into his majestic, grief-struck countenance, with feelings of blended wonder, compassion and awe—in a moment after, she stepped up to him, and silently offered her flowers, with a manner so simple, so child-like, yet so profoundly deferential.

He looked down at her, and the cloud slowly passed from his face; he, a lover of all children, saw in this child's beautiful countenance something that touched the profoundest depths of his heart. Notwithstanding the difference in complexion, Maud was what her mother had been when Daniel Hunter first met her on the boat, only Maud was far more beautiful, more heavenly—a sort of little Augusta idealized, transfigured, made an angel of—or what the spiritual body of little Augusta might have been. He took her offered flowers with one hand, and laid the other hand benignly on her head, while he gazed into those half-veiled, starry eyes. And then, with a sudden impulse, he sat down on a rustic seat, and drew up to his breast.

In the strength of her father's hand, in the gaze of his eyes, she felt, without knowing it, the mighty, the irresistible attraction of nature; self-forgetful, she suddenly buried her head in his bosom, and clasped both arms around his neck, in the strong, vital, thrilling clasp of new-born, deathless love!

And to him it was a revelation; not that he understood it fully; but it was so different from Honoria's formal, lifeless embrace. This was the real, living, involuntary proof of affection, that his heart had hungered for in vain. But he wondered why she gave it, and why it did not surprise him. "It is because I love children so much, and children have an intuitive knowledge of those who sincerely love them," he said to himself. And most tenderly, when the little girl's arms relaxed their clinging clasp, most tenderly he caressed her, murmuring, at intervals—"What a loving, loving child! What a heart she has!—what a simple, loving, trustful heart! Every one must love her! Does not every one love you, darling?"

He might have sat there an hour talking to and caressing the child, had not Ellen come out into the yard.

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"You have a very sweet little girl here, Mrs. O'Leary," he said, as he gave Maud a parting kiss, and set her off his knees, and got up to go.

"It is Sylvia Grove, an orphan, a distant relative of my poor Willie's, sir," said Ellen.

"I hope you will think of the plan I proposed to you, Mrs. O'Leary; and I should be glad if you would permit me to be of service to this little girl, also," said Mr. Hunter, as he got into his saddle.

"I will think of it, sir."

"Good-morning, madam! Good-bye, dear little Sylvia!" said Daniel Hunter, as he rode away.

"Oh, he took the flowers with him!—he took the flowers with him!" murmured Maud, in a low voice to herself.

"What flowers, Sylvia?"

"The flowers I gave him, Ellen."

"Yes, you little imp, you!" exclaimed old Abishag, coming up, "and de werry nex' time I catches of you bein' so forrard to offer flowers to a big bug like Marse Donnel Hunter, I—I'll tell Mr. Bill Ipsy! Dar!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THE TRUE AND THE FALSE HEIRESS.

Face and figure of a child,
Though too calm, you think, and tender
For the childhood you would lend her.—*E. B. Browning.*

A brow whose frowns are vastly grand,
An eye of sun-lit brightness;
A swan-like neck, an arm and hand
Of most bewitching whiteness.—*Praed.*

Big Len had been very mysteriously busy in his own quarter for three or four evenings in succession. The secret was out upon the fourth morning. It was the day after Daniel Hunter's visit to Silver Creek

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It was a cool morning, and a bright little wood fire was burning on the hearth in Ellen's parlor.

Ellen sat in one corner of the chimney, buried in deep, mournful thought—her knitting lay untouched upon her lap.

Maud sat on a cricket, in the opposite corner, next to the kitchen door. The child was bending over her book that lay on her knees, studying conscientiously, but every now and then looking longingly out into the bright air, where the waters were flowing and gurgling merrily, the trees waving, the flowers blooming, birds and butterflies glancing about, and every young life but her own sporting in light and liberty. But Maud conscientiously studied on, until a little noise at the kitchen door behind her caused her to turn around, and she saw old Big Len coming in with something on his head. It was a nice, little, wicker rocking-chair, of his own handy workmanship, which he put down upon the floor with his own quiet smile of pleasure.

"Jes you set down in that there, Miss Sylvy, honey, an' less see ef it'll do for you."

With a look of warm delight, Maud jumped up off her stool, and sat down in the little rocking-chair, and rocked gently backwards and forwards, smiling, and saying,

"Is it for *me*, Uncle Len? Oh! you are so good to me. Indeed, I *do* thank you so much, Uncle Len!"

"You see, honey, I takes notice how you sets on that there cricket, an' stoops over a larnin' your lesson. An', honey, that ain't good for growin' gals. An' now, honey, you can lean back an' study, an' when you gets so tired o' bein' still, you can rock easy while you sez it over. I knows rockin' is very quietin' when one's res'less," said Uncle Len, slowly.

"Oh, Uncle Len, indeed I do thank you so much—it is such a nice chair, and just what I wanted. I never thought about it before, but it—I mean, indeed I used to get *so* tired sitting straight upon that stool, or stooping forward."

"I knows it, honey. That's cause why I made the chair. You no call to thank me, honey. I ain't forgot dem warm yarn gloves you knit for me last winter," said Big Len, backing gently out to escape the little girl's gratitude.



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Maud set aside the stool, and fixed her chair in the corner, and wondered why Ellen did not notice it. But Ellen sat buried in reverie.

"Look, Ellen, see what a nice chair Big Len has made for me. Isn't he good?"

"Yes, love," said Ellen, abstractedly, without even raising her eyes, and Maud, used to her friend's occasional lapses into the land of dreams, left her to herself, and gave her own attention to the study before her.

Presently her lesson was ready, and she took it up to Ellen for recitation.

"What is it, child?" asked the latter, with an air of being painfully drawn from her own thoughts.

"It is my lesson, Ellen."

"I cannot hear you now, child. If you know it, go out and amuse yourself. I have a letter to write to Father Goodrich, and must be alone to think about it."

Glad of the permission, Maud went and got her hood, and ran out into the sunshine.

It was a bright, fresh, spring morning, rather cold for the season, and the child found her old winter frock and hood not uncomfortable. She hovered about the yard a little while, among the daffodils and hyacinths and early roses, but the fine, cool, invigorating air of the morning woke the young thing's wildest want of locomotion, so she soon darted through the little gate, and clambered down to the creek's rocky edge, watched the bright speckled fish dive and glance through the waters, until she was tired of that amusement, and then she ran along down the rocky ledge, bounding, dancing, now slipping almost into the water, and then recovering herself and skipping onward—sporting with danger as with a wild playmate—until at last she reached the foot of the narrow bridle-path leading to Howlet Hall. Here she stopped her skipping, and became, for a moment, grave and thoughtful. She recognized the path—knew where it led. She was seized with a disposition to walk it—not quite to Howlet Hall—not six miles from home—she did not intend that—but a

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strange attraction drew her on to follow—she did not know how far—and she followed it. It led her, by a winding path, up through the stunted cedars to the bleak mountain top; and then by a winding path down through the dwarfed pines to the wooded valley below; to the broad, beautiful valley, where the great forest waved like the heaving sea, on the far distant, opposite side of which rose, like a rocky coast, the mountains that enclosed Howlet Hall. And drawn on and on, into this forest the lonely child entered, and the trees shut in the path behind her, and still she wandered on, now sauntering leisurely, and stopping to gather some sweet wild wood flower, or to watch the flight of some hare or bird startled from its nest, and then bounding and skipping and dancing along, and never meaning to go far, and always intending to turn about and get back time enough to prevent Ellen from being uneasy. But what is time or distance to a child running on alone through the forest, enjoying herself with other young life on a fine spring day, and no one to remind her of their existence? Maud rambled on—stopping to swing upon a hanging grape-vine—now to look at some curious, strange insect upon the trunk of a tree—now to watch the slow sailing wing of an eagle in the air, until, before she knew it, she came out of the forest, and found herself in the thinly scattered and stunted evergreens that clothed the north side of the mountain that circled around Howlet Hollow. Here, against this bleak, north mountain side, lay half thawed the last snow of winter; a dreadful road, all snow and water and mud, deeply guttered by cart wheels, ran along the base of this mountain, but on the other side of this road, and close under the mountain, grew a thicket of cedars. A narrow, slippery foot-way, made of fragments of rock, led across this deep, swampy road. Little Maud paused when she found herself at the edge of this quagmire. She had such an invincible antipathy to mud. But she wished, now that she had got so near it, to climb to the top of that mountain, and look down into the Hollow; and she felt herself an agile little creature, who could spring lightly over that narrow foot-way of rock without slipping into the deep mud. And so

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Maud began to cross carefully, keeping her eyes fixed upon her path—fixed so pertinaciously upon the stones where she was placing her feet, that she did not even perceive the approach of another foot-passenger from the thicket of cedars on the other side—or know that any one was meeting her, until the shadow fell across her feet. Then she looked up. And there before her, on the narrow foot-path, stood a very young lady, of very imperious look and manner, who drew her slight figure up to its stateliest inches, and stood still, as expecting our child to give way. It was totally impossible to pass each other—it was almost equally so to turn back on that narrow, unsteady, slippery footing, without falling plump into the mud. One or the other of them would have to make the best of it, and step soberly off the stones into the deep mire, which would be better certainly than to fall down by attempting to push on or to turn back. Little Maud, with an instinctive sense of justice, looked down at her own and her opponent's feet, to see who was best provided for such a muddy venture. The young lady wore nice patent morocco gaiters, well covered, and defended by gum elastic over-shoes. Maud's little boots were old and leaky; she raised her dove-like eyes appealingly from them to the face of the young lady, to meet there an insolent, questioning look, as who should say,

"How dare you keep me waiting?" And then raising her head arrogantly, she said, with an evident impression that such an announcement ought to turn our child at once into the mud,

"I am Miss Hunter."

"Mrs. Hunter's little girl?" exclaimed Maud, raising her eyes, full of deep reverence for the name.

Miss Honoria deigned no reply, save a haughty bend of the head. And Maud stepped down into the mud and let her go past.

But another pair of eyes had seen this play of insolence and love, and they were fixed tenderly, lingeringly upon our little girl as she climbed back upon the footway. And as Maud regained her footing, she lifted up her eyes and saw upon the other side of the road the beautiful form of Mrs. Daniel Hunter, holding her hands out towards her. Maud hastened, springing from

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stone to stone towards the lady, with the strange, deep impression, that she had found what she had set out that morning to meet.

"Carefully, my child, carefully," said Mrs. Hunter, as the little girl cleared with two bounds the last intervening distance between them, and stood before her. "Why did you go into the mire, my love?"

"It was to let your little girl pass, lady."

"I wish *you* were my little girl, sweet child, but how came you so far from home, love?"

"I set off for a walk by myself, and didn't know how far it was till I got here, lady."

"Why, my child, you surely never started to come to the Hall alone?"

"No, ma'am, I started only for a walk, and it was so pleasant, and I kept on."

"Did you mean to keep on until you got to the Hall, love?"

"No, ma'am—at least I don't know. I believe not, ma'am. I wanted just to go up on the mountain and look down."

"I don't think you quite knew where you were going, love. Does Mrs. O'Leary consent for you to take such long, lonely walks?"

"No, lady, and I must hurry back."

"What—having walked five miles, to walk back again—making ten—it would tire you nearly to death, my child. Come, we are taking a pleasant ride this fine morning. Wont you go with us? We are going first to the Summit, and then round to Silver Creek to see Mrs. O'Leary, and we can take you home sooner than you could walk thither. Will you go?"

"Do you mean I am to ride with you, lady, and you will take me home?" asked Maud, with sparkling eyes

"Yes, love, I should like to do so."

At this moment the carriage came plunging along down the heavy road.

"Be careful, Jerry; you are throwing the mud very near us. Go on as well as you can, and take Miss Honoria in again, and wait for us," said the lady, as the carriage passed.

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The driver touced his hat, and drove on through the slush.

"When we drive over this road, in its bad state, we always have to get out and walk over this portion of it," said Mrs. Hunter, in explanation. Then she added, "I wish this footway was wide enough to admit of my leading you, love; but you will have to walk on before, and I will keep close behind you, and prevent your slipping."

"Oh, I never—I mean I walk over all sorts of slippery places, and even make believe to myself that I am slipping—for fun—but I never fall."

"I hope you wont do that again, love. We must talk about that presently. Go on before, now—I follow you."

And they crossed the narrow footway cautiously, Mrs. Hunter keeping a slight hold on Maud's dress, to catch her if she should slip, and so they reached the other side, where the carriage was waiting for them. Miss Honoria was already seated in it, and the door was opened, and the steps were let down, to admit Mrs. Hunter.

"Get in, love," said the lady.

Maud paused, looked at her very muddy and wet shoes and stockings, and then at the crimson carpeted steps of the carriage.

"Well, love, why don't you get in—shall I help you?" asked Mrs. Hunter.

"Oh, ma'am, you didn't see my feet—look at my feet—they are too muddy to go on your nice red steps."

"I should think so," said Miss Honoria, within.

But Mrs. Hunter took the little girl's hand, and helped her into the carriage. Miss Honoria drew herself fastidiously into a corner, gathering her rich dress around her, with a sneering lip, and a mental sarcasm upon the "comical" protegé mamma had picked up.

"Don't disturb yourself, Honoria—you will not be crowded—the child shall sit by me."

Gentle as was this rebuke, given in soft tones, Honoria felt it, and her manner changed—for if Honoria loved and feared anybody on earth,—if any one on earth could hold her in check, it was Mrs. Hunter.

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And little Maud kept her offending boots, as much as possible, to herself, until Mrs. Hunter kindly laid her hand on the child's head, and said,

"Never mind, love—your little shoes will hurt nothing—mud will dry and rub off, you know; and, besides, when we get to the Summit, we will find a new, clean pair."

They had a very pleasant ride. The carriage windows were open to admit the fresh air and the delightful spring landscape; and in about an hour they reached the Summit. Mrs. Hunter ordered the carriage first to an humble shop, kept by an old maiden lady, named Miss Polly Perry.

Miss Honoria shrugged her shoulders, wondering silently what mamma *could* be thinking of, to go into a shop where there was not a thing fit to be seen for sale.

But Mrs. Hunter went in, nevertheless, and was received in a flutter of delight by the old lady.

"Miss Polly, will you be so kind as to let us go into your sitting-room to try on shoes? and will you please hand me down some of your best shoes and yarn stockings,—of the size to fit this little girl? she has got her feet very wet, and must change these she has on."

Miss Polly Perry eagerly consented, and conducted them into the little back room, where they sat down by a small fire, Mrs. Hunter in a chair, Maud on a small stool by her.

The lady drew off her delicate gloves, and, with her own slender, white fingers, began to untie and remove the child's wet shoes and stockings, and at last the child's little naked foot came out of its coarse covering, as clean and pure as the kernel from its rough shell—such a perfectly beautiful little foot, as it lay in the palm of the lady's hand—such a soft, white, delicate, dainty little foot. The lady clasped her hand upon it, and at its touch —was it only its yielding softness, or was it the irresistible, longing attraction of the same flesh and blood, that sent a strong *thrill* through all her frame, that woke the wish to gather that child, to clasp, to press her form close, *close* to her bosom—to smother her with kisses and caresses, to weep freely over her—

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yes, to weep, for Augusta's heart was at the flood—she knew not why—she could not understand her emotions—she called them weaknesses, and suppressed them. And happily the entrance of the old shop-woman with the shoes, assisted her in recovering herself, so that she only pressed the pretty little foot and let it go.

When the new shoes were fitted on, the lady and child re-entered the carriage, and they drove on towards Silver Creek, where they arrived late in the afternoon. Ellen was surprised and pleased to see them, especially with her little truant in their company. The object of Mrs. Hunter in making this visit was to influence Ellen in favor of allowing her son to be educated by Mr. Hunter. They had a long private interview, in the course of which Mrs. Hunter said,

"You know, my dear Ellen, that if any one had wantonly injured you, there is nothing left you to do but to forgive—and, Ellen, Mr. Hunter never wantonly wronged one of God's creatures, from the smallest to the greatest. And now he earnestly desires to repair, as far as he can, the injustice you have suffered at the hands of the law—*he* knows, and we all know, that the utmost he could do would be but as nothing to the wrong you have suffered; if he could give you his own life, it would not bring back the departed, or compensate you for his loss, but he earnestly desires to do what he can."

"I thank you, Mrs. Hunter. I certainly do thank *you*. But I cannot yet decide. I must write to Father Goodrich first."

The lady smiled gravely.

"I believe, Ellen, that almost every woman, even if she has no father, husband, or brother, has some 'guide, philosopher, and friend,' in the shape of clergyman, neighbor or physician, who is her oracle, and without whose advice she will not stir a step in any matter of importance. At least I have always found it so. We are a dependent race, Ellen. And your oracle is Father Goodrich—well, you could not have a better. I have no doubt as to what his decision will be." The lady arose to go.

"You will not leave us to-night?" said Ellen.

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"I must. And, since the road has been opened through the Summit, I feel no hesitation in traveling by night—it is shorter, and much better."

They then left the bed-room where this interview had taken place, and passed into the parlor, where Miss Honoria sat waiting in sullen dignity, and Maud stood arranging a little bouquet.

"And now I have a favor to ask of you, Mrs. O'Leary," said the lady, lifting her beautiful eyes with a look almost of entreaty to the face of Ellen, and taking the hand of the child. "Will you let this dear little girl come to see me if I send the carriage for her?"

"Certainly; I thank you very much for the interest you take in her, Mrs. Hunter."

"Then you will let her come?"

"Certainly, madam."

It was time to take leave—it was high time to be off—yet still the lady lingered, holding the hand of the child.

"It is almost too much to ask you for your one ewe lamb, yet if you could let her go home with me this evening and spend a week, I would bring her back at the end of that time."

"I should have no objection, Mrs. Hunter, only—look at her! the child has not got her spring clothing yet."

Still the lady held the child's hand, and looked down lovingly upon her, thinking, "she is beautiful in anything—she is as beautiful in this brown, stiff frock as a moss rose in its brown moss—" and then she said,

"Mrs. O'Leary, since this child is an orphan, why not permit me to join you in providing for her? I am—for the sake of the angel I lost—I am the mother of the orphan."

A pause.

"At least let me take her home for a week, and fit her out in spring clothes. You cannot refuse me this pleasure, Ellen?"

Ellen could not, there was so much emotion, feeling, love, entreaty in the lady's look and tone. And so Maud resumed her hood, and went away with Mrs. Hunter to spend a week.



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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE CABINET PICTURE.

And what art thou? I know, but dare not speak,
Time may interpret to his silent years—
Yet in the paleness of thy thoughtful cheek,
And in the light thine ample forehead wears,
And in thy sweetest smiles and in thy tears,
And in thy gentle speech a prophecy
Is whispered to subdue my fondest fears,
And through thine eyes even in thy soul I see
A lamp of vestal fire burning internally.—*Shelley.*

"I AM pleased that you have brought this sweet little girl home with you, Augusta," said Daniel Hunter, as he received his wife, adopted daughter, and, lastly, little Maud—taking the latter tenderly by the hand, and leading her into the sitting-room. He drew her between his knees and untied her hood, and laid it off, while Mrs. Hunter and Miss Honoria went up stairs to take off their bonnets. The tea-table was prepared in the room, and Mr. and Mrs. Lovel were present, and spoke kindly to the little visitor.

"A companion for Honoria, I suppose," said Mrs. Lovel, while Mr. Lovel bent his serious blue eyes earnestly upon the child.

"Yes, I suppose so. I hope so," replied Mr. Hunter. "Mrs. Hunter has brought you to spend some time with us, my dear—has she not?"

"The lady brought me to stay a week, sir," replied the child, who, instinctively meeting all his tenderness, nestled closely in the embrace of her unknown father.

The entrance of Mrs. Hunter and Miss Honoria gave a new impetus to the conversation. Mrs. Hunter partially explained the motive of her bringing the little girl over to the Hall. And Miss Honoria rang for tea, which was soon brought in.

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The next morning Daniel Hunter rode over to the north side

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of the mountain, to see a quarry, from which his laborers were digging stone, to build the new school-house.

Mrs. Lovel and Miss Honoria, attended by Mr. Lovel, drove up to the Summit, to make some purchases and to bring the letters from the post-office. Mrs. Hunter commissioned them also to buy some ginghams, Swiss muslin, lace, ribbon, and a little Leghorn hat, but she did not say for whom these things were intended.

When all had departed, the lady and the child were left alone in the sitting-room. Maud was seated on a little cushion, examining a book of prints that had been put in her hands. Mrs. Hunter sat in her large lounging-chair, contemplating the little girl in silence. Presently the lady left her chair, and went and sat down upon a low ottoman, and called the child to her side, and tenderly encircled her with one arm, and softly smoothed back the burnished auburn curls from her fair brow, and earnestly gazed deeply down into her beautiful countenance. The child's eyes were raised in unshrinking, perfect trust to hers. Any one might have taken them for mother and child. Different as their complexions were, there was the same queenly turn of head and neck; the same graceful, gracious, noble air and expression. For a moment only the lady gazed thus, and then she bowed her regal head until all the long black ringlets swept round the child's bright hair, and pressed an earnest, lingering kiss upon her brow. Then lifting her head again, she began, in low, soft tones, to ask her about her parents—whether she remembered them—whether she loved them. And Maud, leaning trustingly against her unknown mother's bosom, told her all she had heard of what she supposed to be her real story, and how her mother and her father were emigrants, on their way to this country, when a contagious fever broke out in the ship, and how they died of it, just as they were coming into S——; and how, as the city authorities would not let them land dead bodies who had died of the fever, her father and mother had been buried in the S——.

The lady's eyes were streaming with tears.

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"Why do you weep, dear lady? Not for them—they have been in heaven this many a year."

"My child! my child! I, too, have lost a treasure in the sea! a treasure, Sylvia, that will lie there till the day when the Lord shall command the sea to deliver up its dead!"

"Was it your father and mother, dear lady?"

"No, Sylvia—yes! my dear father *was* lost in a storm on the Chesapeake Bay. I was with him, and was saved by Mr. Hunter. I mourned for my father many years, but I got over it at last. That was not what I meant! The sea has been very fatal to me! Oh! my baby! my sweet! my beautiful! my loving Maud!" exclaimed Augusta, dropping her head upon the child's shoulder, and sobbing as she had not sobbed for ten years.

The little girl wound her arms around her neck, laid her cheek to hers, kissed off her tears as fast as they fell, caressed her tenderly, familiarly, yet so strangely!

"Such a beautiful child she was, Sylvia! Such a sweet, heavenly child! Such an angel! And she was drowned! she was drowned! suffocated in the cruel waves, with none to save her—while *I, I,* who ought to have been watching her—*I* was idling on the deck! My child! My beautiful, sweet, loving child!"

All the wounds of her heart seemed torn open, and bleeding afresh—her grief seemed positively as keen as upon the first day of her bereavement.

And the little girl sought to comfort her.

She tried to comfort her—earnestly, because her sympathy was so sincere—silently, because she knew not what to say—clasping and kissing her neck—pressing her face to her cheek—kissing away the flowing tears, and, finally, dropping her head upon her bosom, and weeping, because she could not prevent her from weeping. At last the lady's passionate fit of sorrow spent itself, and she raised her head and wiped away the last traces of her tears, and kissing the child, she said,

"Little comforter, I have not wept so much for many years,

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and there are none that I could have borne to see me weep as I have you. Oh, Sylvia! I have never for a day, for an hour, forgotten my darling. She still lives in my heart—ever! ever! She fills my heart—she fills it! and yet without crowding out anything that ought to be there—on the contrary, she is the inspiration of all the charity that is in me. Perhaps that was the reason why she was taken from me, that she might be nearer to me. I rave—but oh, Sylvia! the memory of that little one has become a part of my being." She paused with a gasping sob, and then resumed. "Not as the young babe that I lost does she always appear to me. I think of her as growing, as what she would be were she alive. Every year—yes! every month since she died I have said to myself, 'if my dearest child had lived, she would have been so old,' and every time I see a little girl of about what her age and looks might have been, I think within myself, if sweet Maud were living she would be so tall. When I first saw Honoria, my heart was drawn to her, because she looked like what Maud might have been—only not so beautiful! not so lovely!"

Thus the lady spoke, incautiously, impulsively pouring her heart's secrets into the ear of the child, who heard, surprised, wondering, yet received the confidence instinctively as a sacred trust not to be afterwards spoken of.

"And when I first saw you, love, it was that that drew me so strongly to you. The likeness between Maud and Honoria has faded out—she is not at all like what my Maud would have been—but *you* are. I know you are, and that is what drew me to you, and now I love you for *yourself*."

The child stole her arm round the lady's neck and pressed it. The lady stooped and caressed her, and resumed.

"Little friend, I have never, never been reconciled to her loss—never! The thought of her—the desire of her is a mighty—mighty—everlasting—unsatisfied hunger of the heart—a dreadful craving that will never be quieted till I meet her—and God forgive me! often, very often—the sweet, dearest, best, most comforting thought of Heaven has been, that I should meet



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my angel there! You look at me with sad wondering eyes, love! Do not wonder—she was all that I had—all that I *ever* had—my one lone child."

"But, Miss Honoria?" said Sylvia, gently.

"Honoria is not my child, love. I never had a child but Maud, and never wanted any but her. I had been married five years, and thought the Lord never would give me a child, when, at last, he sent me one sweet angel from heaven—my only one—perhaps that was the reason that I loved her unto death—perhaps if he had sent me more I should not have loved this one so much, or grieved for her so long, and yet, perhaps, just the very same! But I made an idol of my angel, and I lost her. I lost her! I lost her! And ever since that I have felt like a stranger and a pilgrim in the wilderness of the world—looking—always looking for what I cannot find. Perhaps if my dearest one had died in her bed, and had been buried, and I knew where her grave was, it might not be so with me. I should not feel this dreadful unrest—this strange, insane wish to peer into the face of every strange child I see, who looks as I think she might have looked—perhaps I should cease this involuntary, habitual, wild, weary looking for the lost. And I dream of her so often, Sylvia! She is always being restored to me, and what is strange, I am never surprised—it always seems so natural. And she is never surprised—she always seems to have remembered and to know me."

Mrs. Hunter paused. And Maud reflected that *she, too,* always dreamed of her lost mother, whom it was not possible she could remember—but she did not speak of this to the lady, apropos as it was—a deep, respectful sympathy held her silent in regard to herself. The lady resumed.

"Little comforter, I have shown you the very weakness of my heart, as I would not show it to any other; and while I hold you in my arms, and press you to my bosom, a peace and rest and contentment come to me as perfect as it is incomprehensible; but I am afraid that while you comfort *me,* I sadden you; that must not be! Come, love, go with me, and I will show you my dear child's portrait and all her little things."

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And Mrs. Hunter arose and took the child's hand and led her up stairs—first into a large, handsomely furnished bed-room, where she said, in passing—"This is my chamber, Sylvia"—and thence into a small, well-lighted, beautifully arranged room, furnished with a child's property; there was a rosewood crib, hung with lace curtains lined with rose-colored silk; there was a little chair and a little fairy carriage; and on one side of the room hung, row above row, beautiful little garments—cloaks, robes and gowns; on a stand, in a corner, lay a little cloak and hood, as if just laid off, and against the centre of the wall fronting the entrance, stood a table covered with a child's toys; and above this table hung the portrait, encircled with a wreath of fresh white rose-buds.

"Come in, love. No one enters this room but myself; they cannot bear to do it, they say. Here are all little Maud's things. That is her portrait. They cannot bear to look at it, or even at anything that belonged to her, because they loved her so much, and grieve for her so much. People must be very different—for I loved her more than any one else did—I mourn her more than any one else does. I have never ceased to love and grieve for her. Yet it is *here*, among memorials of her, that I come for comfort—that I come to pray. Look at her, little girl! Is she not lovely?" said Mrs. Hunter, leading Maud up in front of the table, and directing her gaze to the portrait above it.

It was a charming picture, a picture of the mother and the child. But the mother was purposely thrown into the background, and into shadow by her dark ringlets, dark complexion, and dark drapery, and her attitude in holding the child. She held the child up under the arms, facing you, and the little creature seemed springing, bounding from its mother's lap into your arms. It was a strangely life-like portrait of little Maud, finished a few days previous to her loss. She was half-dressed only, in a pure white cymar, the golden hair turning in bright spiral ringlets about the fair forehead, temples and neck; the attitude and expression full of vitality, the color heightened, the rosy, dewy lips apart, the eyes and arms and feet springy, danc-

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ing! The illusion was absolutely startling—the rosy, laughing, bounding, living babe seemed about to spring into your arms. Maud gazed at her own unknown portrait with the strangest sensations; and as she looked into the bright depths of the pictured eyes, until they seemed to be living, conscious eyes, returning her gaze and laughing at her, a smile stole over her features.

"Why do you smile, Sylvia?"

"I don't know, lady; only it makes me feel so strangely to look into her eyes, and to feel her looking back; her eyes look as if they knew some secret that I don't, and were laughing at me about it—and it seems to me as if I had seen her before, somewhere—in a dream—I don't know where—and somehow it does not seem to me as if she—"

"Why do you stop, my dear?"

"I was running on so foolishly, lady."

"What were you going to say, love?"

"I was going to say—but it was so foolish—I was going to say I did not think she *could* have been drowned!"

The lady trembled all over—she took the child's hand and led her to a chair, and sat down and encircled her with one arm, and dropped her forehead on her head, and remained so several minutes; at last, without raising her head, she asked, in a low voice,

"What made you think so, child?"

"I do not know whether it was the picture or not, lady—but as I looked at it I *did* think your little child must be still alive!"

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## CHAPTER XXIX.

### THE SUMMONS.

All things have rest—why should we toil alone?
We only toil who are the first of things,
And make perpetual moan,
Still from one labor to another thrown;
Nor ever fold our wings
Nor cease from wanderings.—*Tennyson.*

"My father the son of a blacksmith!! Mamma! Miss Spooner's girl says that my father was the son of a blacksmith!" exclaimed Miss Honoria, one morning, bursting into the bedroom of Mrs. Hunter like a very child, totally provoked out of her young ladyish airs and graces.

Miss Honoria, with her pride and pretension, was very unpopular in the neighborhood. Upon this particular morning, Miss Spooner and her little niece, Bessie, had come over to spend the day at Howlet Hall. While waiting for Mrs. Hunter to come down Mrs. Lovel had entertained Miss Spooner in the sitting-room, and little Bessy asked Miss Honoria to take her to see her new flower garden. Our young lady had complied, in her haughty, tossy manner, behaving in the garden with so much insolence as to provoke little Bessie to do as children will sometimes—to taunt her with her father's origin, by saying,

"I'm sure you needn't put on so many airs to me, Miss Honor, for your father was nothing but a poor blacksmith's son."

The blood rushed to the fair Honoria's face, and throbbed in the purple veins of her forehead. For a moment she was speechless and motionless with surprise and indignation—if she had heard her father accused of a crime, or of being the son of a felon, she could scarcely have felt more grossly insulted, more outraged. She did not believe it, of course—it was a malicious slander, she felt sure. For an instant she stood struck statue-still with astonishment and rage, and then, oblivious of all her womanish self-possession and propriety, she abruptly broke from

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her companion, and rushed into Mrs. Hunter's presence, crimson, palpitating, and exclaiming,

"*My* father the son of a blacksmith!"

The lady stood at her dressing-bureau, smoothing her black hair, previous to going down stairs to her visitor. She turned with surprise at the rude, unusual entree of Honoria, and hearing her indignant exclamation, she sat down in her chair, and beckoned the excited girl to her side

"What is it, Honoria?"

"Miss Spooner's niece *dares* to say that my father was the son of a blacksmith!"

"The Redeemer of the world was the son of a carpenter, my dear."

"Mamma, I know that—but—but—oh! think of the outrageous, insulting slander—*my* father the son of a blacksmith! Daniel Hunter the son of a blacksmith!"

"Well, my dear, it is perfectly true."

"Oh, mamma!"

"Certainly."

"Oh! mamma, how could that be, when I've heard—when I've heard—"

"What, my dear?"

"That *you* were the daughter of a nobleman!"

"Of a poor Scotch lord, my dear."

"Still—a lord! and oh, mamma! to marry so beneath you!"

"HONORIA!"

"Forgive me, madam—but I didn't know it—I thought we were of the first families—I mean I thought my father was a gentleman *born*—and—and—it came upon me like a shock—and—"

Honoria paused abruptly, burst into tears, and sank down into the nearest chair.

Mrs. Hunter had risen, and was standing, resting her elbow on the dressing-bureau, and gazing with grief and displeasure upon the little, empty, vapid, conceited creature before her—at last she spoke with sorrowful severity—and her tones were slow and measured:—

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"Miss Honoria, you will have to attain a far higher moral and intellectual excellence than I fear you will ever reach, before you can so much as imagine why I honor my democratic husband far more than all my long line of noble ancestors; and how it is that I should glory more in him than in them, had they been even royal as well as noble!

"That Daniel Hunter was born the son of a poor, hard-working mechanic, is not his shame—while that he has risen from that station to his present one—IS HIS GLORY!

"And not *his* only, but the glory of the country of EQUAL RIGHTS."

The lady said no more—perhaps she felt that she had said too much—that to have expended any "virtuous indignation," or any democratic sentiments upon Miss Honoria, was a sort of casting "pearls before swine."

She had been grievously disappointed in her adopted daughter, since the first day when the infantile beauty, grace, and fondness of little Honoria had touched her heart, and prompted her to take the child. And when these infant charms gave place to the cold and repulsive affectations of the boarding-school Miss, and the selfish and heartless character of the girl revealed itself, the lady did not conceal her chagrin.

And now after this scene, she sighed deeply, as she went below stairs. She could have loved Honoria very dearly, had the girl possessed any strong, redeeming point of character; even as it was, she loved her enough to feel every new revelation of her selfishness most deeply. And she sighed heavily as she went down stairs.

Mrs. Hunter had another reason for sighing, besides the bad behavior of Miss Honoria. Maud had left her that morning, and she had left a vacancy in her heart and home, not easily to be filled.

She entered the sitting-room, and Miss Spooner arose to receive her. Miss Spooner was her neighbor, a maiden lady of thirty-five years old, who farmed her own land, managed her own negroes, brought up her niece Bessie, and intended to marry

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Mr. Bill Ipsy, as soon as she could break him of his bad habit of twitching his eyebrows. Miss Spooner had come in full of news and gossip and questions—among the rest,

"Was it true that Mr. Hunter was appointed ambassador to France?"

"Certainly not," replied Mrs. Hunter; "Heaven forbid that he should be taken so soon from his rest, and thrown again into the battle of political life."

Well, she was very glad, she was sure. Only she had heard it confidently asserted by Mr. Bill Ipsy, and it was currently reported in the village.

Mrs. Hunter repeated her assertion that there could be no truth in the rumor, since they had had no advice of even such an intention on the part of the administration.

Miss Spooner expressed herself delighted to receive such a satisfactory assurance from what she called "head-quarters."

But even while speaking confidently, Mrs. Hunter grew pale with sudden apprehension. Daniel Hunter had certainly received no appointment—nor even intimation of a future appointment to any public post or duty whatever—she was sure of that.

But—that impending "French question," in which he had taken such a profound interest, which he had examined so closely, studied so deeply—with which he was known to be so thoroughly well acquainted! Was it possible the administration was thinking of sending him to France, charged with some negotiation? Ah! it was possible—it was probable—it was but too likely! She was deeply disturbed—she knew, she felt, by the sure instinct of affection, that unless he could have some rest, some cessation from political care and toil, his life would not be long. She saw it in the changing hair, in the failing muscle, in the slight stoop, in the slower step, and in the lower voice; iron frame as he had, he was one of those who "grow old in youth, and die ere middle age." She felt this—she felt that his only hope was in a long interval of rest. Her own, her soul's treasure, her life's greatest good—she could have thrown her arms around him and held him there in his retreat.

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She was grave and thoughtful during the whole visit of Miss Spooner. Scarcely could she maintain the fair and stately courtesy for which Mrs. Hunter was distinguished. And when her visitor arose and took leave and departed, she felt relieved.

Evening came, and with it the messenger from the post-office. Mrs. Hunter herself received the mail-bag, and eagerly opened it. There were newspapers and letters from friends and relatives—and—yes—there at the bottom, was a letter in a broad envelope, bearing the Washington post-mark, and an official stamp—for Daniel Hunter—undoubtedly this was the official notice of his appointment. She looked at it, and turned it over with a sigh. She wished for the privilege—of throwing it into the fire—she almost felt the temptation to do so—but it might not be, and she laid it down with the other letters for Daniel Hunter, in a little pile on the centre-table, by his easy-chair, and proceeded to the distribution of the rest of the family mail, putting Honoria's letters into her little elegant work-basket, and sending Mr. and Mrs. Lovel's up to Lucy's room. There were none for herself—and for once she did not care—she was too interested in that office envelope, that bore the stamp—"Executive Chamber," on the corner. She took up one of the Washington papers—the then organ of the administration, and one of the first paragraphs that met her eyes confirmed her belief.

"*We understand* that the Honorable Daniel Hunter has been appointed Ambassador to the Court of St. Germain—charged with the settlement—" &c., &c., &c.

She read the paragraph through, and laid aside the paper, moralizing mournfully upon the cost of greatness—homeless wanderers were they, mocked by all the means and appliances of domestic comfort, poverty-stricken in the midst of wealth. Other distinguished men might "live at home, at ease"—not Daniel Hunter—he must work and struggle to the last—must live and die with the harness on his neck. She was aroused from her sad reverie by the entrance of Mrs. Lovel and Miss Honoria, who came fluttering in, full of news and full of delight. Miss



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Honoria was ecstatic—that is—as *nearly* so as it became an incipient fine lady to be; and because her school friends, the Misses Rose and Annie Bell were coming down to spend the summer with her, while their parents were making a tour of the springs. And Mrs. Lovel was very much pleased with her own letters and news. She had letters from father and mother, and from both married sisters, all breathing of the quietude, the blessedness of sweet domestic ease and peace. Her sister Harriet had another baby—a beautiful (of course) little daughter, who was to be called Lucy, after the family beauty, whom she was thought to resemble. All spoke of peace, of permanency, of "sweet home." Their home, alas! was but a hotel at their command, to eat and sleep a night or two in, in hurrying through the world.

Mrs. Lovel's bright eyes lighted on the pile of letters for Mr. Hunter.

"Why, what a heap of letters for brother Dan!" she said, seizing them, and shuffling them all over; "more than a dozen; and here's one from Douglas—and here's quite a formidable looking affair from the White House, I presume. Goodness! hasn't he done with *them* yet? Oh! and here's a letter from Letty! *Do* open it, and let's hear what she says;" and the thoughtless, heedless beauty threw it into Augusta's lap; "come, open it! I am all impatience."

Mrs. Hunter quietly laid it back on the table, saying,

"I never open another's letters."

"*What*—not open brother Dan's; not your husband's?"

"No."

"Well! I declare! I open all Mr. Lovel's, and he opens mine—but *then we* have no secrets from each—"

"But that is no reason for having no *courtesy* for each other."

"Oh! you look at it in that light, do you? Well, you know 'fools rush in where angels fear to tread,' and as I am dying to read Letty's letter, therefore—" and the rash little lady took up the letter and cracked the seal; but before she could quite break it, Mrs. Hunter, with a look of grave displeasure, arrested her hand. And Lucy laughed, and desisted.

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Miss Honoria had seated herself at the piano, and was strumming a new piece of music that had come down to her that very mail. Tea was waiting to be brought up, but Daniel Hunter had not come in yet—he had not been home since morning—he had spent the whole day at the quarries. Augusta walked out upon the piazza, to be alone with her own thoughts, to enjoy the night's beauty, and to listen for his coming. It was a lovely starlight night—so still—so calm, peaceful, holy. Cradled in encircling mountains, their home lay reposing in beauty. Their home! would it had been! they must leave it so soon; it was their home only in name. Back to the bustling, struggling, battling world must they go; back to the elbowing, pushing competition; back to the "crowded city's horrible street." At last, amid the low, musical ripple of water, and shiver of leaves, and chirp of insects, she heard the distant footfall of a horse, that came nearer and nearer, until he bounded in full gallop up to the house, and Daniel Hunter alighted from the saddle, threw the reins to a groom in attendance, and came up the steps.

"They have been blasting rock all day, Augusta; and, really, these poor, thick-headed negroes, with that thoughtless, hair-brained Irishman for an overseer, would blow themselves up unless I stayed to direct them. Has the mail bag come? You are very grave, love, are you not well?" said Daniel Hunter, taking her hand, and looking wistfully into her face.

"I am very well, and the mail bag has come; but do not open your letters till after tea," replied Augusta, throwing off her gloom.

"Why? Any bad news? If so it is better to hear it, and have done with it at once."

"No; no bad news at all. All the letters we have opened bring us good news, but we have been waiting tea for some time, and if we have to wait until you look over all your letters—well! I shall get out of patience, that's all."

"You?"

"*I*—do you think that impossible or improbable?"

Daniel Hunter laughed and chucked her under the chin, and took her arm in his and marched into the house

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The tea and waffles were brought up smoking, through the other door, and set upon the table, and Mr. Lovel was standing at the back of his chair, with his hands folded and his face composed, ready to ask a blessing, and Mrs. Lovel and Miss Honoria were in their places, and so nothing was left Daniel Hunter but to comply, which he did, with a protestation that ladies always turned tables and tyrants at some time of their lives, and he supposed Mrs. Hunter's time had now arrived. The truth is, Augusta wished that he should enjoy one more tea at home—with the true home feeling—for she knew that after the opening of that document, this feeling would be lost. And a very merry, social tea-party it was. Mrs. Lovel was pleasantly loquacious with her news; Honoria, full of delightful anticipations; Mr. Lovel, soberly gay, and Daniel Hunter, with careless abandon, lending his ears so to all, that Augusta's spirits were agreeably stirred—*he* looked so easy and contented—so free from thought and anxiety—could it be that he would destroy his home and his peace, by throwing himself headlong again into the dreadful melee of political life? He was not *obliged* to accept the appointment, that was certain, and perhaps he might decline it. Still this was not likely, he had interested himself too deeply in that French problem.

Tea was over, and all arose from the table. Daniel Hunter gathered up his letters and papers from the round table, and saying, laughingly, that he would not be a reading, silent kill-joy in the sitting-room, bowed and was about to go to his study. Mrs. Hunter half arose from her chair, and looked after him.

"Come then, Augusta," he said.

And they left the room together and reached the study. And Daniel Hunter threw down his packets upon the table, drew a chair up for his wife, and seated himself, and began to shuffle his letters. His eye lighted upon the official communication—his eye lighted! all the other letters and papers, with their seals unbroken, were thrown aside, and *this* was seized—was torn open—was devoured.

"I knew it!" he said, "I knew it! I knew it must come to

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this at last! I knew *this* would be the final resort! And if they had done this before, I know not how much time, labor, anxiety and expense to the administration would have been saved."

"What is it?"

"They are going to send me to Paris—clothed with full powers to negotiate the settlement of this question."

"Oh! And will you go?"

"*Will I go?*" Daniel Hunter held the document aside, and fixed his large, strong eyes upon her face, as if he doubted his own hearing or her senses.

"But—just as we were getting so comfortably settled?"

"I feel it! I feel it! But I must go, Augusta—there is not a man in the country who can terminate this matter but myself."

He paused and took her hand and held it in silent thought a little while, and then, half communing with himself, half with her, he said,

"My poor Augusta, it is rather hard on you; I feel it. Since you have known me you have never had a fixed home, or a settled family, or permanent circle of friends, or anything that makes a woman's life natural and comfortable and happy. As soon as you have made a pleasant home, and friendly social ties, the home has been broken up, and the ties severed, and your fate—*I* have hurried you away somewhere else. You have been like a plant, always torn up by the roots and transplanted, and never remaining long enough in one place to draw nutriment and life from it."

He paused again, holding fast the small hand within his own, and seemed to reflect rapidly for a moment, and then he smiled on her and said,

"I had nearly been betrayed into the insincerity of proposing to you *not* to break up your home and your newly formed relations with this neighborhood—but to let me go to France alone, while you remained here keeping house, and—yes—keeping the *county*. What you would have thought of such a proposition, I do not know."



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"Why, I should have been betrayed into the folly of taking it very hard indeed."

"But that you should have to break up again so soon."

"Don't think of me. I was not thinking of myself; the gipsy life would suit me well enough, if for *you* it possessed the gipsy freedom from care as well; but to have you thrown again into that boiling maelstrom of politics, and to see you so hurried with anxiety, when you so need rest, and peace, and forgetfulness."

"And do you think, my dear, that rest, that forgetfulness, are possible for me? Don't you know that it is the curse of those who give their whole heart and soul to politics, never to be able to recall the gift? And do you think that in the months I have passed at home, I have been free?"

"Ah, no; often I thought you had left your soul behind you in the cabinet at Washington. Ah! why should it be so? Why should you toil so? Why should the whole burden and responsibility of a nation like this, be thrown upon the shoulders of only three or four men. Only three or four! for, Mr. Hunter, I have lived long enough in political circles—long enough in Washington city, to know that there are not half a dozen *real* patriots among the political leaders of either party; no, not half a dozen men who do not prefer their own narrow selfish ends and objects, to the greatest good that could come to the nation at large; and this is the greatest difficulty that earnest, disinterested men have to meet; their most dangerous enemies are, not the foreign foe, but the traitor in the camp."

"No more of this, dear Augusta—let us talk of our voyage."

"When do we go?"

"Immediately; just as soon as we can make a hurried packing and be off.

And then with his usual promptitude of decision and action, Daniel Hunter rapidly sketched out his plan of arrangement.

"Mr. Ipsy," he said, "must be left in charge of the works at the quarry and at the Summit—he must also be accountant, treasurer, and paymaster, during our absence. Mr. Lovel and

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Lucy must live here, and keep the house warm against we come back. And there is one thing that I must do, and do at once," he exclaimed, suddenly, drawing writing materials before him, "I must write over to Mrs. O'Leary, and get her decision about placing that boy to school; if she consents, we can take him along with us, and put him at college as we go to Boston; for we shall sail from that port."

He rapidly wrote, folded and sealed a note, and rang for a servant to take it.

"Here, John, take this note to Mrs. O'Leary, by sunrise tomorrow morning. I must have the answer on my plate at breakfast," he said to the man that entered.

The messenger bowed and retired.

"And now, love, let's return to the parlor to Lucy and Lovel, who, if I mistake not, are beginning to yawn in each other's faces before this."

## CHAPTER XXX.

### THE SHADOW.

The shadow of a scaffold past,
Projected o'er his youth.

On the same evening, Ellen, in her little parlor, sat and wept. An open letter was in her hand; it was from Father Goodrich, in answer to hers asking his counsel as to whether she should accept Daniel Hunter's proposal to put her son to school.

Father Goodrich directed her to accept the offer in the same spirit of kindness in which it was given. "Would you," he wrote, "prevent a man from making reparation for his sin—were it even a sin? how much less should you hinder him from repairing what was his own, as well as your calamity?" And farther down the letter, he wrote—"But why do you keep the secret of his father's fate concealed from Falconer? He is now

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fifteen years old; tell him how his father died, and why; tell him at once; if *you* do not, some one else will, in a less tender and truthful version."

That was the reason why Ellen wept, that she must turn back for Falconer this dark page in their life's history.

Maud, full of happy reveries, had gone to bed. The colored people were nodding over their evening work in the kitchen. Falconer, who had gone to the Summit that afternoon, had not yet returned. Ellen was waiting for him—resolved to take that opportunity of quietness and solitude to tell him of the mournful past. It was early yet, not eight o'clock, and she heard the quick tramp of the boy's feet as he came running and bounding up the rocky ascent to the cottage—he threw the door open, and entered with a face radiant with youth and health and joy.

"It was so pleasant, mother, to see the light of the little cottage window streaming across the water as I came along. Did you expect me sooner, mother? I should have been here half an hour ago, only I met Mr. Hunter at the Summit, and he engaged me in a talk, all about my wanting to be a sculptor, you know! And, mother, he did not talk as you and Aunt Abishag do about it! he didn't call it foolishness, but he talked wisely, he said it was a passion and a talent given me by the Creator for good purposes, that I must be faithful to it—and—and he gave me these," said the boy, throwing a packet of books on the table. "Why don't you ask me what they are, mother? What makes you so unsympathizing?"

"I am not unsympathizing. I am glad to see you so happy. What is it, then?"

"'Cunningham's Lives of the Painters and Sculptors,' mother. And Mr. Hunter told me to pay close attention to the early struggles and perseverance of all successful artists." And Falconer put away his hat and gloves, and sat down and began to untie his books.

"Put them away now. I have something to say to you, my dear Falconer." The seriousness of her tone struck him; he looked up, and for the first time noticed the deep mournfulness

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of her countenance—it impressed him so painfully, that he jumped up and put away his books, and was at her side in a moment, full of affectionate attention.

"My dear, dearest mother! You are in trouble, and I have been rattling on so. What is it? Is it the grocery bill?"

"No, Falconer.'

"What then—the taxes?"

"No, no—it is nothing like that—" then, after a pause—"Falconer, did you never wonder about and want to hear the history of your father?"

In a moment the boy's face was as grave, as solemn as her own.

"Say, Falconer, do you never think about him?"

"Mother! as far back as I can recollect, I recollect missing him—and being ill—and losing you for a time—and having you back again, but all that is like a very long past, confused dream. And much more distinctly than that do I remember Aunt Abishag telling me I must never ask about my father, and never so much as name him before *any* body, much less before *you*. She has continued to tell me so all my life, but she never would tell me why. Now, dearest mother, open your heart to me—tell me all about it. Is he living? Did he go away and leave you? Open your heart to me, dear mother. I will be *so* prudent. Say, did he deceive and leave you?"

"No—no, boy, you blaspheme! He was a saint, an angel! was your father—the greatest blessing and glory of my life; but he was *sacrificed, Falconer, he was sacrificed—do you understand me?*"

Falconer did not. He fixed his large eyes searchingly upon his mother's countenance, but could not make out her meaning.

"Sacrificed?" he repeated, vaguely.

"Oh! Falconer, don't you understand me? don't you understand me?" cried the miserable widow.

"*Sacrificed?* How?"

"Oh, Falconer! he died—he died for another!"

"Died for another—I don't—I—"

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"Oh, Falconer—he died—your father died in the place of another. *Now*, do you understand?"

"Yes, I do now; that was a noble deed, dear mother! He died in saving some one's life! Oh! it was a noble, a heroic deed!" exclaimed the boy, with his eyes kindling—"a heroic deed! but, dearest mother, why was it not to be spoken of before you? and yet I can imagine, too! it distressed you too much to hear of his death, noble as it was!"

"Alas! my Lord! Alas!"

"Mother!"

"Oh, Falconer! his death was *not* noble! it was not noble! it was not considered so! it was shameful, my poor boy! it was shameful, though most unmerited!"

"Mother! Mother! My God! Mother!" cried the boy, pale as herself, leaning breathlessly forward, clasping her knees, and gazing madly into her face. "Mother! what do you mean?"

"He—your father—innocent—estimable—excellent!—he died on the scaffold for another's crime."

The boy bounded like a wounded panther.

Ellen dropped her head upon her hands, sobbing convulsively, and so passed several minutes, until from the opposite side of the room came a slow, heavy step, and a husky voice, saying,

"Mother! tell me the whole story."

Ellen repressed her sobs, calmed herself, and mournfully prepared to relate the dark and dreadful tragedy.

Falconer threw himself upon the floor at her feet, dropped his hot and throbbing head upon her lap, and prepared to listen.

Ellen told the story of her husband's arrest, trial and conviction, upon circumstantial evidence.

Falconer listened in stern silence, until this part of the tale was finished, when he broke forth bitterly,

"And these are the laws of a model republic! So imperfect as to immolate the innocent, and let the guilty escape!"

Ellen next spoke of her journey to A——, to intercede with the Governor for her husband's reprieve.

Here Falconer listened with the keenest attention.

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Ellen spoke of the great interest everywhere testified by the people in William O'Leary's fate; of the powerful intercessions made in his behalf; of her own and his mother's interview with the Governor; and of the total failure of every effort to obtain a reprieve; and she dwelt with unconscious injustice upon the conduct of Daniel Hunter.

And again Falconer broke forth in passionate indignation—

"And *this* is the man—the demigod, who has the whole nation at his feet! Oh! I am but a unit in many millions—I am but a boy—but here I consecrate myself, with all my faculties of mind and body, to the vindication of my father; to the overthrow of this people's idol; and perhaps—perhaps to the remodelling of this imperfect law!"

He exclaimed and gesticulated like a rash, presumptous, vehement, passionate boy as he was—yet, nevertheless, his sudden indignation and hatred were not the less strong, earnest, profound and enduring.

His gentle mother was distressed—not that she imagined her poor boy could ever, even if he lived long enough, accomplish any of the Quixotic vengeance threatened upon the world-renowned statesman; but she was alarmed for her son's immediate interests; she feared that Falconer would spurn all the offers of Daniel Hunter to assist and advance him. She dared not now even mention Mr. Hunter's wish to place her boy at college—she only ventured to suggest that in refusing to grant a reprieve to O'Leary, Daniel Hunter had acted from a high sense of duty—and that since their bereavement he had been very kind to the family—a suggestion that was met by the excited youth with such a torrent—such a storm of impetuous, impassioned denunciation and invective, as terrified the weak mother into silence.

In striding distractedly about the floor, Falconer's eyes fell upon the packet of books given him that afternoon by Mr. Hunter—his eyes flashed forth again—he seized the parcel exclaiming—

"To degrade me by an obligation like this! To degrade me! Shall I throw them into the fire, or send them back to him?" He held them poised in his hand a few moments, and then cast

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them upon the table, saying, "I will send them back to him." And then, exhausted by the vehemence and impetuosity of his passion, the boy flung himself down upon a stool, and buried his face in his open palms and sat silent and motionless, until Ellen lighted a candle and placed it in his hands, and bade him

"Good-night."

Then he arose, and put his arms around his mother's neck, and kissed her, and silently went to his room. And Ellen retired to hers, where, sleeping the sweet sleep of peace and innocence, lay Maud.

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The next morning early, as Ellen, Maud, and Falconer were seated at the breakfast-table, there was heard a rap at the door Ellen said,

"Come in."

And the latch was lifted, and John, the messenger from How let Hall, entered, bowing.

Falconer started violently, grew red in the face, and looked threateningly at the messenger.

But John passed him respectfully, laid Mr. Hunter's note before Mrs. O'Leary, bowed, and stood, hat in hand, waiting.

Ellen took up and read the note with a softening countenance. It requested her decision upon the question of sending Falconer to college, and an immediate answer. She finished it, and handed it over to her son, saying,

"There—you see what Mr. Hunter is anxious to do for you—and the assistance and patronage of a man like Daniel Hunter will make your fortune."

Falconer received the note, and with lowering brow and curling lips, glanced over its contents. Then springing up, he turned to the messenger, and fiercely exclaimed,

"Go and tell your master that my answer is THIS!" He cast the note beneath his feet, set his heel upon it, and ground it to the floor.

The man stared in astonishment. Ellen heard in grief and trepidation, and little Maud in wonder and sorrow.

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"Yes!" continued Falconer, "go tell Mr. Hunter that last night, for the first time, I was made acquainted with all my family's wrongs. Last night I learned, for the first time, that through *his* obduracy alone my guiltless father died a felon's death—lies in a felon's grave—and his poor old mother lingers out her wretched days in a mad-house. Nor are my mother's nor my own wrongs forgotten—not the least of which is, that he tries to force upon us obligations which, coming from him, would degrade us! Tell him that I am his bitter, implacable enemy! Tell him that I live to vindicate, to avenge my family. He may laugh at that! for he is a great politician—I—a poor boy! Let him laugh now; the time will come when he will not laugh!—for let him remember, that while he is growing old and weak, I am growing strong! and let him beware!"

All were silent except Maud, who, in a complete chaos of sorrow and amazement, stole from her seat to her brother's side, and clasping him in terror, said,

"Oh, no, no—don't send that message—don't! Oh, Falconer! *what* is the matter with you? *what* do you mean?"

Falconer put his hand around her, and drew her head under his arm caressingly, protectingly, but did not otherwise answer her, or even look at her, or for an instant sheath his flashing glance, that was still turned towards Daniel Hunter's messenger.

And Maud stole her arms up around his neck, and pressed her head to him, and entreated,

"Oh, Falconer, take back the message! tell the man not to carry it. I love them so. Sylvia loves them so!"

He turned a look upon his little sister, as if he would shake her embrace off, but tenderness prevailed over resentment, and he drew her closer to him saying,

"You don't know anything about it, Sylvia, else you would take sides with me," and turning fiercely around upon the servant, and beginning with, "Tell Daniel Hunter," he discharged another volley of defiant messages. And when he had done speaking, and had sat down, Ellen spoke quietly, saying,

"You are to report nothing whatever of this to Mr. Hunter,



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John. You are to remember that if you carry this disrespectful message to your master, from a mere boy to whom he never sent you, you yourself are guilty of disrespect; but tell him from *me* that I am grateful for his kind intentions, and will certainly give him farther answer to-morrow."

And with this reply, the man bowed himself out, remounted his horse, and departed. Falconer left the breakfast-table, and sat down in the window in morose silence. Maud would have gone to him, but his looks frightened and repelled her. She went to Ellen, who was quietly weeping, and, embracing her, asked,

"Oh, Ellen, what is the matter with Falconer? And what is all that dreadful thing he was talking about?"

"Hush, my child, don't ask—you will know some day. As for Falconer, he is a wild, hot-headed boy, who is letting his passions run ahead of his reason."

Falconer flamed up with a storm of contradiction in his eyes, but he said nothing.

"I hope he does not fancy," continued Ellen, "that because once in a *fable* a grateful mouse delivered a lion from a net, that it is possible in *fact* for a mouse to entrap a lion."

Falconer assumed a look of firm, stolid determination, and made no answer.

And nothing more was said at the time. In the afternoon, when the mother and son were both more composed, Ellen tried by every possible argument and persuasion to overcome the boy's hatred of Daniel Hunter, and to induce him to accept his patronage, but her efforts were without any other effect than the ill one of increasing his animosity. The renewal of the discussion the next morning was equally fruitless of good—Falconer declaring that before he would owe his education and establishment in life to Daniel Hunter, he would——go to sea! And that last threat—dreadful to the widowed mother—silenced her, and ended the controversy.

And now the poor, weak mother sighed and groaned with vain repentance, that she had indulged and yielded to her noble-

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hearted but too headstrong boy from his earliest youth to the present, when he was too self-willed to be controlled.

She wrote to Daniel Hunter, again thanking him for his kind intentions, but begging him to allow her to *reserve* her acceptance of his offer for some future time. Thus she endeavored to escape the pain and the loss of a positive refusal.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### THE BED CHAMBER.

Clasp me a little longer on the brink
Of fate! while yet I fear thy dear caress;
And when the sea divides us two—oh think—
And let it mitigate thy woe's excess—
That thou hast been to me all tenderness.—*Campbell.*

In the meantime Mrs. Hunter made preparations for her voyage. On Sunday she met her class at the Sunday-school, and announced her necessity of leaving them, placed them under the charge of Mrs. Lovel, and then bade them an affectionate farewell. The little girls were all too recent acquaintances, and had seen too little of their teacher, to feel much grief at her withdrawal from them.

All but Maud! She heard the lovely lady tell of her intended departure, with a sad, half-incredulous amazement. She could not talk, she could not study her lesson—it was as much as she could do to keep from bursting into tears.

Mrs. Hunter saw her agitation, but forbore to meet her eyes, or to speak to her, lest she should destroy the little girl's frail self-possession. When the school was out, she took the child's hand, and said,

"You must sit with me in my pew to-day, love," and led her down. And, oh, what self-control it required in the little one to preserve her calmness! When they were seated in the pew, the solemnity of the church services had a wholesome, strengthening

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effect upon the little girl, awing her soul and elevating her thoughts above dwelling on her childish sorrow. When the services were over, Mrs. Hunter still held the child's hand, through the long half-hour that friends and neighbors thronged around to take leave of the lady. And when all this was past, she led her out and kissed her, and bade her good-bye, saying, as she saw the soft, wistful eye full of tears, "I will come and see you again, love, before I go away," and kissing her again, she gave her into the charge of Big Len, and entered her own carriage to drive home.

All that day, Maud could think of nothing else, could feel nothing else but the sorrow of losing the beautiful lady to whom her heart cleaved with an everlasting adhesion. All the next day she was looking, hoping for her promised visit, and when night came, disappointed and sorrowful, she went to bed and wept herself to sleep. She never spoke of her love and her sorrow to a single soul—she instinctively felt that Ellen would wonder, and Falconer would scoff at her loving so dearly a lady who was no kin to her, and whom she had not known but such a little time. Besides, she felt that there was something too holy and sacred in the affection between herself and that wondrous lady to be lightly spoken of. And she knew that on earth no being understood and sympathized with her so entirely as Mrs. Hunter.

The next morning the child arose for another day of anxious looking. After breakfast she took her book, and sat at the front window, watching the bridle-path along the edge of the creek. But the hours passed, and the lady came not. Dinner was placed upon the table, and Falconer came in from his work in the garden, and they all gathered around the board, and talked of the departure of the Hunter's. But Maud could not eat; her eyes turned longingly towards the bridle-path down by the water. The meal was ended and the service cleared away, and Falconer returned to his weeding in the garden, and Ellen resumed her knitting, and Maud went and sat down again by the side of the window and watched;—but still the lady came not And the

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child's impatience grew intolerable, and she suddenly started up, snatched her bonnet and ran off to the bridle-path, and wandered up it for some distance, straining her eyes to catch, perchance, a distant glimpse of the lady's Andalusian pony. In vain! And then she remembered that Mrs. Hunter might probably come by the carriage road, and she turned and hastened back to the cottage in the hope of finding the lady already arrived. It was not so. And the little girl mournfully, unwillingly gave her up for the day, and sat herself down to her needle-work, and forced herself to attend to it for the whole remainder of the afternoon.

The sun set. The shades of evening came on. It grew too dark for the little seamstress to see to sew, and she folded up her work and put it in her little basket, and arose to set it away, when her eyes fell upon the longed-for pony at the very door, and the lady in the act of alighting.

With an irrepressible cry of joy the child sprang to meet her. Mrs. Hunter received her in her arms, kissed her tenderly on both cheeks, pressed her closely to her bosom, and then leading her, entered the cottage.

Ellen had arisen and stood waiting, and now she came forward to receive her unexpected visitor.

"You are surprised to see me at this hour, Mrs. O'Leary; but I promised this dear little girl to come and visit her again before I left. I also desired to see you, of course, and there was no opportunity of my coming but to-night."

"I am at all hours very happy to see you, Mrs. Hunter; and —*Honoria!*" Ellen added, in a faltering voice.

"You must come over and see Honoria in the morning. She is very well and happy, and all eagerness for her voyage."

"Oh! but she treats me with—with so much hauteur," said the poor mother, sadly.

"We must be patient with Honoria; the world that has so prematurely spoiled her, will, in time, cure her."

"I hope that something will—I have not much comfort in my children. But sit down, Mrs. Hunter, and give me your hat."



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"I must ask you to have the horses put up, and to give me a bed here to-night, Ellen, for I have only a boy with me, and it will be too late to return to the Hall this evening," said Mrs. Hunter, drawing off her gloves and removing her hat and handing them to Maud, for the very comfort she felt in being waited upon by the little girl.

Maud received these outer garments, and carefully put them away, and then returned and drew her little cricket to the lady's side, and shyly put her hand into the lady's hand. Mrs. Hunter tenderly clasped the little fingers that lovingly sought hers, and played with them until Ellen went out to order the tea. Then, when they were left alone, the lady lifted the child to her lap, pressed her to her bosom, and gave way to all the fondness of her feelings. And Maud! as she reposed on that lovely and loved bosom, her very breathings were full of deep joy. They did not talk to each other much—perhaps they did not understand each other well—heart clung to heart, they knew not why—they could not give a reason for the love that was in them. They sought each other's eyes, silently *half unconsciously* questioning one another what this irresistible attraction—what this strong cohesion might mean? And receiving no answer from the oracle, they clung, grew together the closer.

Ellen re-entered the room, attended by little Len, who came to set the table. And then followed the supper. They were joined by Falconer. And after the evening meal was over, and the service was removed, Mrs. Hunter once more addressed Ellen upon the subject of Falconer's education. But Falconer interrupted the reply of his mother, by frankly stating his reason for declining Mr. Hunter's proffers. This the boy did in a calm, self-possessed, gentlemanly manner, without expressing any of the violent feelings of antagonism that had taken possession of his bosom.

Mrs. Hunter was surprised and grieved to see the extent of the control which the headstrong, self-willed youth had gained over his gentle, yielding mother, and reluctantly abandoned the controversy.

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When the hour of retirement arrived, Ellen lighted a candle to show Mrs. Hunter to her sleeping apartment. And the lady arose, kissed the child, and prepared to follow; but the little one looked after her so wistfully, so wishfully, that she turned back and held out her hand, and said,

"Come, then, love—come with me!"

And Maud joyfully sprang up and followed her. When they reached the upper chamber where Mrs. Hunter was to sleep, she begged Ellen to permit the child to share her bed. Ellen demurred, objected, feared Sylvia would trouble her, etc.; but the lady drew the child within her arms; and Ellen, with many cautions to the little girl not to be troublesome, consented that she should stay, and bidding them good-night, left the room. Maud lighted her from the chamber, and closed the door after her.

Mrs. Hunter held out her arms, saying,

"Come to me, my child, my little love, my darling—oh! my darling."

And when Maud crept to her bosom, embracing her, she said,

"Little one, do you know what brought me all the way from Howlet Hall hither to-night? Oh! darling, it was to stay with you—to cradle you in my arms for this one night. Little one, tell me why I love you so? Tell me what you think is the reason why I love you so? for children are in some things wiser, because they are *truer* than men and women. Tell me, Sylvia, tell me why I love you so?"

"Oh, I wish I knew, lady; but isn't it because I love you so—I love you so. What sweet hair! it falls so soft on my cheeks, as if it was kissing me."

"Foolish, loving child! shall I cut off one of these black curls, and give you to keep?"

"Oh, no! not for the world! don't kill one of the dear ringlets for me; let them all live together, the beautiful ringlets! I can remember them; but I will give you *all* my curls, if you will have them."

"I wish I could have them and you, all! curls, and little face,

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and form, and heart, and soul, all! But, darling, I did not come here only to—to satisfy my selfish love of you; I came to do you good. I want you to grow up to be a good, wise woman—fair and good and wise. And you can grow so; it is in you. All yesterday I spent in selecting and classifying books for you, and preparing a written plan for your studies. I will send them over to-morrow, love. And you will follow my plan, and educate yourself, while I am gone. You will have no teachers, little one. No matter for that; no matter at all. Teachers, when they are *good* ones, are well enough for the stupid and the slothful, but remember this, that the greatest, the wisest, the best men and women, have been self-educated at last; that all in which they have transcended the rest of the world have been self-achievements. Remember, love, that all that is good may be learned of one's self; and all that is best of God."

The lady paused a little while, and then said,

"But I must not keep you up, darling; go and get your night clothes, and we will go to bed."

Maud went and got her little cambric gown and cap, and Mrs. Hunter, with her own gentle hands, undressed the child, and put her night clothes on her. And then they knelt together, (the lady, with her arm clasped around the child's neck,) offered up their evening's worship, and retired to bed.

Maud lay a long time in a silent, blissful, wakeful trance, before she fell sweetly asleep upon the lady's bosom, and then she slept soundly—only once half waking, half dreaming, she nestled closer to that loved form, murmuring, "*Mother—dear mother!*" and woke the lady just as she herself relapsed again into sound, dreamless sleep. And Mrs. Hunter felt not sure whether she had dreamed or heard the child call her "mother."

It was then near day, and the family below stairs were astir. And soon after Maud's lovely eyes opened camly, and smiled upon her angel, as in her heart she called Mrs. Hunter. They both arose, and began to prepare their morning toilet. And again the lady pleased herself by turning nurse-maid to the little girl, putting on all her clothes, and combing and curling her

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beautiful hair. And by the time both were ready, Ellen sent for them to come down to breakfast. And when they went below, Ellen and Falconer and two of the servants were in the room, and the charm of their privacy was broken.

Ellen came between them, with well-meant admonitions to the child, to behave herself, and not to be troublesome.

And Falconer, when he could get a chance, nudged his sister, and whispered to her—

"For goodness sake, do not be so much like a little spaniel to the great lady."

When breakfast was over, Mrs. Hunter's Andalusian, and Ellen's mountain pony, were saddled and brought around to the cottage gate, where they stood waiting, in charge of the groom, while the ladies prepared for their ride. But even after they were quite ready to depart, Mrs. Hunter still lingered, unwilling to leave. She sat talking to Ellen, and stroking and caressing the head of Maud, who sat on a little cricket at her feet. The child, though her heart was swelling and ready to burst with grief, behaved like a little heroine, sitting at the lady's feet as calm, as still, as a beautiful piece of wax-work.

But presently she slipped away.

And after a little while, Mrs. Hunter, tired of waiting for her return, and feeling the necessity of departing, arose to go. She went to the cottage windows and looked around the yard, and not seeing the little girl anywhere, she inquired where she was, and requested that she should be sent for. And Ellen arose, and went and opened the kitchen door, and seeing no one there but Big Len, she called him, and told him to go and find Sylvia, and tell her to come in directly, for they were in a hurry to go.

Big Len got up and took his old white hat down from the peg, and put it on his head, and went to look for the child.

He found her at the back of the cottage, under the shadow of the great rock, sitting with her head dropped upon her hands in her lap, and sobbing convulsively. Big Len asked her what was the matter. But she only shook her head, and broke out sobbing afresh. He told her that Mrs. Hunter was going, and was

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waiting to take leave of her, and begged her to come into the house. And then she answered through her sobs,

"I know it, Uncle Len, I know it—that's why I can't help crying. I love her so—oh, I love her so—she feels so like my own dear mother—but I don't want her to see me crying—it would make her so sorry. Just please to wait a little minute, Uncle Len, and I will get done. There! now I will go in, Uncle Len," said the child, swallowing her last tears, and repressing her sobs, and wiping her eyes, and rising to go into the house.

When they re-entered the cottage, Mrs. Hunter called the little girl to her side, and marked the traces of recent tears upon her pale cheeks, and saw them ready to burst forth again; but she also observed and respected her efforts to repress them, and forbore to take farther notice, lest she should overthrow her fragile self-control. She took her by the hand, and charged her to remember all she had said to her, and to study the books she should send to her according to the system laid down; and to grow up a fair, wise, good girl. And then the lady took the child in her arms in a last embrace, and turned and left the house. Her groom led her palfrey up, and assisted her into the saddle.

Ellen lingered a moment behind, giving some last directions about the care of the house, and then she too mounted, and the little party set forth.

Maud, left alone in the cottage, threw herself down upon the carpet, and rolling over on her face, gave way to all her childish sorrow. She had remained so, weeping and sobbing, for some time, when the kitchen door opened, and Big Len came in slowly, and stooping over her to raise her, said,

"Come, honey—come, Miss Sylva—come—don't take on so, honey—let's you an' me go and gather some wild strawberries. Come, honey—I'll show you where de groun' red wid 'em."

"No, no, I can't, Uncle Len,—'deed I can't. I don't care a bit about strawberries—I don't care for anything in the world, now she is gone. I loved her so, oh! I loved her so. I shall never see her again—no, never, never," cried Maud, rolling and sobbing.

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"Oh, you mustn' say dat der, honey, I heern 'em say how she wur gwine come back in a year," said Big Len, trying to comfort her.

"Oh, a year! a year! it is everlasting—it will never come to an end. A year! Oh! and this is only the first day—and there are—there are three hundred and sixty-five! Oh! Uncle Len, I shall never, *never* see her again. Mother! sweet mother!"

"Hush, honey, don't take on so—it ain't a bit o' use—'sides which, you ain't got no right to, caze you know she ain't none o' your ma."

"She is! Oh, Uncle Len, it don't matter if I wa'n't her born child; she seems just like my own dear, sweet mother, that I would die for. She's gone—! A year! Oh! oh! I shall never, never live through it. I shall never, never see her again!" said the child, bursting into a passion of tears and sobs. At last—

"'Tis 'stonishing!" said old Len.

"What is, Uncle Len?"

"De way you-dem do take to one anoder. When I open de gate to let 'em go by, I seen her a wiping away her tears behind her veil."

"Did you? Oh, Uncle Len, she loves me so! she does! I hope she wont cry much. I don't want her to cry, but I want her to love me."

It was useless for Big Len to try to comfort her in this stage of her grief. Nature best provides consolation—she provides reaction for action; and after the child's storm of tears and sobs expended itself, she became calmer, and took her book and sat down to study.

Late in the afternoon Ellen returned. She was attended by a mounted groom from Howlet Hall, who brought upon the horse before him a large packet from Mrs. Hunter to Sylvia. There were books, and prints, and a box of drawing materials, and a little furnished writing-desk. And as much as she was pleased at the presents, they made Maud weep the more—weep to think

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that for a moment she could take pleasure in anything now that Mrs. Hunter was gone. Neither Ellen, nor old Abishag, nor Aunt Moll, had any patience with her sorrow. They scolded her well for it, and thought that they were doing right. When night came, she was sent early to bed, and exhausted by the grief and excitement of the day, she fell into a sound sleep.

In the morning she awoke with a vague, dull sense of sorrow. And soon she recollected why it was that her heart was so heavy. She had parted from Mrs. Hunter—parted from the "beautiful angel" of her life—the lady was going to cross the sea, and she would not see her again for a long, long year, that seemed for ever. Would not see her again? An intense, irresistible desire to do so, took possession of her heart, and it created a hope. Suddenly, across her despair came a flash of hope, like an inspiration! It was possible to see her once: *once* more before she should go! Yes! *to-day* it was possible to see her *once* more! *To-morrow* it would be *im*possible. To-day was her last day at home. To-morrow she would be on her journey. Maud, quick as thought, took her resolution—that she *would* see her beloved lady once again; that she would see her that very morning. That was the one bright light in her near future, and it lighted up all the darkness beyond. She sprang out of bed, and washed and dressed hastily, yet with ease. Then she took her book and quickly committed her daily lesson to memory, and then went down to breakfast. Her face was so full of a new cheerfulness, that Ellen and old Abishag verily thought it was the blessed effects of the rallying they had given her the evening before, and congratulated themselves accordingly. After breakfast, she begged Ellen to hear her lesson, because she wished to go out and take a walk. And Ellen complied, and praised her diligence. And then Maud put her book away, and took her bonnet, and started on her visit. For the child always went and came unquestioned.

Maud took the bridle-path up the course of the stream, along the narrow ledge of rocks, between the dark, frowning precipice, and the bright, glittering water. She followed it where it wound

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up and over the bleak cedar-covered mountain, and down into the wooded valley below, and through the shadowy forest to the second range of mountains that encircled Howlet Hollow. She passed the place where she had once met Mrs. Hunter and Honoria, and still pursuing the bridle-path, ascended the Barrier rocks, until she reached about half the distance up, where she lost her way in the labyrinth of intersecting paths in the neighborhood of the quarries, where we must leave her for the present.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### A VISION OF SUDDEN DEATH.

> My God! Can it be possible I have
> To die so suddenly—so young to go
> Whither? Oh whither?

THAT morning, Mrs. Hunter had arisen early to complete her final preparation for the journey. She had purposed to go to the Summit in the course of the day to make a few purchases. Daniel Hunter had taken an early walk over to the quarries, leaving directions with his wife to call there for him on her return from the village. About the middle of the afternoon, Mrs. Hunter ordered her carriage, and drove over to the Summit. And having completed her purchases at the village store, she sat out on her return to the Hall. An hour's drive down the declivity of the Summit, into and through the valley below, brought them to the Barrier around the Hollow. And about half way up the ascent they reached the fork of the road, where it led off—on the right hand down to the Hall—on the left over to the quarries. Here Mrs. Hunter pulled the check string, and ordered her coachman to turn to the left, and drive to the quarries, that they might take up his master, and bring him home to dinner. And the horses' heads were turned accordingly. This road led through a fine growth of open pine woods on the mountain



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side, where a great deal of the work of "improvement" was going on; wood-cutters were levelling trees and trimming their huge trunks; other laborers were lading carts, and others driving them off towards a saw-mill turned by a mountain torrent a little farther down the road. Mrs. Hunter's present carriage was an open one, and as they drove slowly through the obstructions of the road, she looked with pleasure upon the energetic, enterprising laborers—pleasure alloyed by regret for the fall of the kingly pines. About a quarter of a mile farther down the road they came in sight of the new saw-mill. Piles of unhewn pine logs stood about everywhere, but the newly laden carts had not yet come, and the scene was solitary, and the mill was silent. Mrs. Hunter was glad that it was so, for the sake of the horses and her own safety. The coachman reined up the horses for a moment, to prepare to take the short turn that led down the mountain side to the foot of the stone works. But as he paused, and before he could bring his horses around to make the turn desired, the machinery of the mill was suddenly set in motion from within, and maddened by the terrific noise, the horses bounded forward, and ran furiously down the road to the fearful "Groove" and "Shelf," over the top of the quarry.

"Hold hard! For the love of God, hold hard, Henry! If they enter the Groove we will be dashed to pieces!" exclaimed Mrs. Hunter, springing forward with the impulse of seizing the reins, and adding her own strength to the negro's, to arrest their fatal speed.

"For the Lord's sake, sit still, mist'ess! No! don't jump out! You'd kill yourself! If the gate is shut we are safe!"

"And if it is open we are lost!" exclaimed the lady, sinking back and covering her eyes with both hands, as they were hurled, *shot* into the fatal Groove.

For a moment she sat thus, then dropped her hands, and opened her eyes to look death in the face! The carriage was plunging and heaving, and bounding and rebounding, as the maddened horses fled furious along a narrow, straight road, cut deeply through the solid rock to the edge of the precipice above

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the quarries. At the extremity of this was a gate, catching with a strong spring, and pullies for raising the rock to the top. But the gate was now open, and the way clear, and nothing was seen but the open sky beyond, and nothing *felt* but the precipice —the DEATH below. Delirious with terror, the coachman threw up the reins and leaped from the carriage, and fell, and was trampled to death by the horses, in their frenzied flight towards destruction. Pale, and cold, and still as marble, sat the lady. For one agonizing moment this vision of sudden death swam before her fading sight; and then—ah! then along the edge of the ridge stretching from the left, was seen the form of a little girl, a mere child, flying towards the gate! Flying! flying! flying! wildly, impetuously, recklessly! flinging her life to the winds in her flight. She reached the gate! she clanged it to! she had saved her mother, and now she dropped out of sight. Mrs. Hunter had recognized Maud with a thrill of mingled terror, joy and anguish. At another moment the sudden deliverance from impending death would have overwhelmed her—she must have swooned—but now an intense agony of anxiety strung every nerve up to its severest tension. Where *was* the child? Was she killed? Oh, God! was she killed? Had she fallen down the precipice? Had the child met the death she had saved the lady from? In a single moment all these questions pierced the lady's heart, while the horses, suddenly arrested in their flight, were plunging and kicking violently—and then men were seen coming up the ridge, and running towards the carriage. They reached it—the foremost ones seized the reins, and controlled the struggling horses, and Mrs. Hunter sprung out, exclaiming, breathlessly,

"My God! the child! the child! is she—is she—" She dared not ask if she were killed.

But at that instant Daniel Hunter himself was seen ascending the ridge, bearing the white-robed form of the child in his arms. Augusta ran towards him.

"The child! oh, God! is she—is *she*—DEAD?"

The lady almost wailed out this last dreadful word, for the

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child lay across Daniel Hunter's arms, with her head and limbs drooping, placid, limber, bleeding, like one freshly killed.

"I do not know—she has had a dreadful fall! Be calm, Augusta—my dear wife, be calm, if you wish to do any good," said Daniel Hunter, but even his face had the pale, firm, set look that it ever wore in moments of great suffering. "I have started a man on horseback to the Summit for a physician. We must get her to the Hall as quickly and easily as possible—is the carriage in a condition to convey her thither?"

"Yes! the carriage is uninjured, but I am afraid Henry is very much hurt. He attempted to jump from his seat, and was thrown out and run over."

"Good Heaven! Here, Dawkins! take two or three men, and hasten up the road to the assistance of our coachman, who has been injured—and tell those boys to hasten and turn the carriage around. Come," said Daniel Hunter, leading the way, and striding onwards towards the coach. "Get in, Augusta, and I'll put her in your lap."

And the lady entered the carriage, and received the form of the child in her arms.

Daniel Hunter entered and sat by her side, and they were driven slowly towards the Hall. The distance was short. And during the drive Daniel Hunter told his wife that he had been overseeing some new excavations from a ledge of rocks about eight feet below the top of the precipice, and had suddenly been startled by the voice of a child, crying to them to hasten up and help—some one or something, they could not well hear—and at the same moment he had caught sight of this child, flying towards the open gate, which she reached, shut with a violent clang, and then, thrown back by the impetus she had fallen to the ledge below. He ran and raised her up in his arms, sent men hurrying up the ridge to see what was the matter, and followed with the form of the little girl. By the time Daniel Hunter had given Augusta these particulars, the carriage had reached Howlet Hall, and the child was lifted out and carried in, and placed upon a bed—where she lay insensible, limber, placid, like a beautiful

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broken lily. Mr. Hunter got his lancet, stripped up her sleeve, and opened a vein; and as the blood began to flow, she unclosed her gentle eyes; and as sense and memory slowly returned, she turned her glances inquiringly around the room, and finally fixed them upon the face of Daniel Hunter, just as he finished binding up her arm. Her sweet eyes were gazing in his face—her sweet lips murmuring something to his ear. He stooped down to listen.

"The lady; oh! is the *lady* safe?"

"Safe, my angel child," said Mrs. Hunter, overwhelmed with emotion, and coming and bending over the little broken form.

The child smiled, and attempted to raise both arms to clasp around the lady's neck; but she dropped them and a convulsion of agony passed over her face; yet she uttered no cry.

And soon she fixed her beautiful eyes upon the lady's face, and murmured,

"*Mother, sweet mother.*"

"I *am* your mother, my best, dearest child! my darling, my loving darling! I *am* your mother! I *will* be your mother! For I never, no *never*, loved my own lost Maud better than you!"

The slow, heavy step of the old family physician was heard upon the stairs, and a moment after the chamber door was thrown open by a servant, who preceded and announced him, and Doctor Henry entered. He was a large, ponderous old gentleman, whose benignant countenance expressed all the genial humor which his long acquaintance with sickness and suffering had not been able to cloud. He advanced into the room, and Daniel Hunter arose and came forward to meet him, explained to him the accident that had happened to the little girl, and conducted him to her bedside. The child looked up inquiringly at the stranger bending over her. Doctor Henry spoke cheerfully to the little girl, and asked her where she was hurt. She smiled gently and replied,

"Not much—anywhere."

He then stooped over her, and cautiously proceeded to an examination of her injuries—lifting and feeling—first her left arm, which gave her no pain, and then her right one, at the first light



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touch of which she winced and shrank, and upon its greater pressure she grew pale with agony and shuddered from head to foot.

The kind doctor's good humored countenance became troubled; he raised himself up and drew a deep breath, very like a sigh.

Mrs. Hunter lifted her languid eyelids, and threw her eyes into his with a gaze of intense anxiety and inquiry. And Daniel Hunter put the question into words by asking,

"What are her injuries, sir? Is she much hurt?"

"Her right shoulder is dislocated," answered the doctor, and then turning to Mrs. Hunter he asked for soft, strong linen bandages.

The lady pulled the bell cord, and then, without waiting for the coming of a servant, hastened from the room to procure the required articles.

Attracted by her anxious, beseeching look, the doctor followed her into the passage-way. He closed the door behind him, and found her waiting there.

"Doctor, what are you going to do?"

"To set the child's shoulder, madam."

"Oh, doctor, will it not be a very painful process?"

"Yes, madam, but it will be a short one. Some one must hold her. And the sooner we get it set, of course, the easier for her will be the operation."

Mrs. Hunter shuddered, but turned away and hastened into an adjoining linen closet, where she procured the material for the bandages.

The doctor returned to the sick-room, where the lady soon joined him.

Seeing these preparations, the hurt child turned her gentle eyes anxiously from one to the other.

Mrs. Hunter tenderly replied to these questioning glances by stooping over her and kissing her lips, and saying,

"Your little shoulder is out of place, love, and the good doctor is going to set it right for you."

An involuntary expression of fear and dread passed over the

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child's lovely face, and she looked appealingly in the lady's eyes. Mrs. Hunter suppressed her rising emotion, and answered calmly to that fear:—

"Yes, my child, it will give you pain, but I will hold you in my arms, and you will bear it well, my little heroine."

The little girl smiled and nodded assent, and clasped the lady's fingers in her small hand.

"I am ready," said Doctor Henry.

"Can you hold her, Mrs. Hunter? Are you strong enough? Can you control her? She must be held *perfectly* still—not permitted to start or to struggle," asked Daniel Hunter.

"Oh, no, madam, she must not be permitted to move—she must be held fast," said the doctor.

"Indeed I will be very good. I will be very still if you will let the lady hold me," pleaded the child, turning her gentle eyes from one to the other.

"I can control her," said Mrs. Hunter, sitting down on a low chair and preparing to receive her in her lap.

Daniel Hunter raised the little invalid most tenderly, and laid her in the lady's arms, pale and trembling with the pain that even this slight motion occasioned.

The doctor then knelt upon one knee, and placing his left hand at the back of her shoulder blade, and taking hold of her shoulder joint with his right hand, slowly let his whole strength upon her little limb and forced it back into its socket.

The patient child uttered no cry, but her very lips blanched and sprang quivering apart—and when all was over she had fainted from agony. Her shoulder was carefully and strongly bandaged in its place, and the little sufferer was laid upon her bed, and means were taken to restore her to consciousness. And when she recovered from her fainting fit, the doctor, leaving directions that she should be kept still and upon a low diet, departed.

Mr. and Mrs. Hunter watched silently by her bed-side, until, from exhaustion, she had fallen asleep, and then Augusta spoke.

"We shall not go to-morrow, I suppose, Mr. Hunter? We cannot leave this dear child in this condition?"

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"No—no," said Daniel Hunter, meditatively, "we cannot leave her so."

A servant now appeared at the chamber door, and, bowing, said that Doctor Henry sent his respects, and requested to see Mr. Hunter below stairs. Daniel Hunter arose and went down. He had been summoned only to be informed of the fate of the unfortunate coachman whose cowardice and imprudence had been the occasion of his death. To have this poor mutilated corpse laid out for burial—to give orders for the funeral to take place on the ensuing day; and to mount a messenger on horseback, and send to Silver Creek to inform Ellen of the condition of her foster child, occupied Daniel for the remainder of the day. And when late in the afternoon he visited the sick child, he found that fever had set in, and she was wandering in delirium.

Ellen came the next morning. The child was very ill for three days, and then came the crisis, and the healthy reaction And Ellen returned to Silver Creek, leaving her foster daughter in the care of Mrs. Hunter.

The days of the little girl's convalescence were the very sweetest days of her life. She lay in that downy, fragrant bed, propped up with pillows, with the lady that she loved so passionately sitting ever by her side, performing all a mother's tender, loving services for her, bathing her face and hands with perfumed water, gently combing out her hair, bringing her little, delicate, nutritious messes, telling her stories, or singing her to sleep. It was like a dream of Heaven to the child. One morning Sylvia lay in the lady's arms while the chamber-maid was making up her bed. And the child drew her arms around Mrs. Hunter, and nestled her head in her bosom and murmured,

"*My own dear mother!*"

And the lady caressed her softly, and whispered,

"Yes—call me mother always, my darling—I love to hear you call me so. Your sweet lips are the first that ever spoke that word to my ears. Honoria always called me mamma. You are the first that ever called me mother. And you did it voluntarily—that makes me happy."

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"I could not help it, *dear mother!* It came right from my heart to my lips, and I couldn't keep it back. And I never called any one but *you my mother.*"

"How was it, love, that you never called Mrs. O'Leary so?"

"I don't know, lady, unless it was that she taught me so. I know when I was a very little child she used to call me and say—'Come to its Ellen.'"

"That was it, my darling. And so my child never called any one mother before me?"

"No indeed, lady."

"And I never was called mother before you called me so, said Mrs. Hunter, her face radiating a soft light of joy as she caressed her little girl.

It was a happy time for both, and the lady improved the rapidly passing days by strengthening the little girl's mind for the impending separation. She told her that it was very possible that Mr. Hunter and herself might be able to return home as soon as he had concluded the state affair that carried him to Paris. She promised that they would correspond frequently in the meantime.

And she so calmed and fortified the child's mind, that when the day of parting arrived, and she took her home to Silver Creek, and took a final leave of her, the separation was made much easier, and Maud, comforted and hopeful, lived on sweet memories of the lady, and bright anticipations of her return.

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# PART THIRD.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### THE STAR OF SILVER CREEK.

Though varying wishes, hopes, and fears
Fevered the progress of these years,
Yet now, days, weeks and months but seem
The recollection of a dream;
So still we glide down to the sea
Of fathomless eternity.—*Walter Scott.*

SEVERAL years passed before the child and the lady met. Indeed the *child* and the lady *never* met again; for in the years of of absence, the child became the woman. Had either at the moment of their parting suspected the length of time that should separate them, scarcely could they have borne to say "good-by." But hope buoyed them up at their leave-taking; and hope attended them, promising fairly through all the years of absence, until seven years glided away, and brought near the period when they should meet again. These years had been full of changes to all with whom our narrative is concerned.

First—the dear "old folks at home"—old Daniel Hunter and his wife, full of years and good works, were gathered to their fathers. "After life's fitful fever *they* slept well." All their children were around them in their last hours; all but Daniel Hunter. The great statesman had not the privilege of the poorest, humblest of the people; the privilege of receiving his old parent's dying blessing, and closing their eyes, and performing for them the last, mournful offices of love and veneration.

Mr. and Mrs. Daniel Hunter passed all these years at the greatest



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courts of Europe. It was in this manner: soon after Mr. Hunter had most satisfactorily concluded the diplomatic business that carried him to Paris, and while he was preparing for his return to his native country—the then American Minister to the Court of France was recalled, and Daniel Hunter, the successful diplomatist, was appointed to fill his vacated place. After a residence of two or three years at the French Court, Mr. Hunter was sent to Russia, and subsequently to England. Daniel Hunter had certainly scarcely a rival in the estimation of the administration at Washington. But in the meantime, while winning fresh laurels as a diplomatist by his skillful and successful negotiations abroad, and gaining golden opinions from the government at home, he was fast losing ground in the love of the people. During his long continued absence from his native country, himself and his great services were suffered to fall into forgetfulness by the fickle and ungrateful populace.

His own party in his own State had a new hero, a young demi-god, FALCONER O'LEARY, whose name became a party WAR CRY, which, thundered among the mountains, could at any time convene a meeting or carry away a mob. A stump orator, whose magic might lay in the burning wild-fire of unconventional, uncontrolled and uncontrollable passions and eloquence. A young demi-god, demi-demon, blessed or cursed with that mighty mastery for good or evil over other human heads and hearts, termed by various philosophers, mesmeric power, or force, but which may be nothing more than the possession of hotter passions, stronger will, clearer intellect, and firmer purpose than others have. Impassioned, burning, vehement, impetuous, irresistible, he could bend a mob before him as the mountain wind bends the pine tops. At this time doubtless he would have had his seat in the State Legislature, or in the national Congress, had he not been by the provisions of the Constitution two or three years too young. As it was, as far as influence in his own district could go, he could send whom he pleased thither.

Ellen was dead. The weak, gentle creature slowly declined for several years, and easily sank away into her everlasting rest.

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During her gradual decay, Maud nursed her with more than a daughter's tenderness and devotion. At intervals during the last six weeks of her life, Ellen had written a long, loving letter to Honoria, and inclosed it in one to Mrs. Daniel Hunter, requesting that lady to deliver it to her daughter, if she saw no objection, and when she thought proper.

After the death of Ellen, Sylvia kept the cottage. The lovely child had bloomed into a lovely woman, a maiden whose supernal beauty must have immortalized her in the old heroic times, or deified her in the ancient Olympic ages. It is seldom in these matter-of-fact days, that a maiden, however beautiful, wins a *nomme-de-fantaisie* for beauty; yet Sylvia did gain such a one. The poetic taste of Mr. Bill Ipsy baptized her "the Star of Silver Creek," and as such, through mountain and valley, the peerless maiden was known. Falconer considered her as his own dear sister, he said. But surely never was a sister loved with such a fierce, jealous, vigilant affection. It was very strange, but very true—he seemed in his conduct towards the beautiful girl, very much like the dragon that guarded the golden apples in the gardens of the Hesperides; or rather, in sober truth, he was more like the fabled dog in the manger—he did not seem to want the maiden for himself, and he would not let any one else have her; no, nor even so much as to come and take a look at her lovely face. He did not seem in the slightest degree disposed to change their relation of brother and sister into a nearer and dearer one; yet, he firmly and immutably set his face against the approaches of any other young man, however worthy he might be of her consideration. He watched her closely—he guarded her vigilantly. He escorted her whenever she left the cottage. Even at church, if a youth stole a glance of admiration at the maiden, it threw Falconer into passion; and at the village, if the handsome clerks were unusually polite to her, it was sufficient to destroy her brother's peace for a week. Finally, he never forgave Mr. Bill Ipsy for christening his lovely sister the Star of Silver Creek, and so creating her the beautiful celebrity of the county. Falconer's jealousy of Sylvia extended even to those

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of her own sex. It made him angry to see her the centre of a circle of girls, smiling and chatting in the church-yard. She could get no good from them, he said, they would do her harm; the silly, chattering, feather-brained creatures! The fact was, that all these girls had brothers and cousins who admired Sylvia —as they must have done, of course—and Falconer was very zealous to shield Sylvia from the knowledge of such a fact.

Gentle as Sylvia was, she certainly liked to do as she pleased, especially as she generally pleased to do right. Of intellect eminently active, independent and original, she never gave expression to a new idea, or a daring speculation, without receiving an instantaneous check from her brother. Of affection singularly warm, social, and clinging, her heart never reached out its tendrils for love and sympathy, even from her own sex, without being nipped by the frost of Falconer's jealous interference.

Just in proportion to his love seemed his desire to subject her to his own will—to control her, body, soul, and spirit—thoughts, affections, and principles. He seemed to wish to surround, envelope, and absorb her individuality, her life, into his own. And he was jealous, vengeful, antagonistic, and uncompromising with anything or any person that militated against this desire.

Loving freedom of thought, speech, and action with passionate enthusiasm, Sylvia felt this growing surveillance, this constant constraint, this most unreasonable despotism, becoming daily more intolerable. There were hours when she felt this with a sense of imprisonment and of suffocation. And her spirit wildly beat its wings against the power seeking to close around it.

It would have been easy to throw off the yoke of any being less loving, less devoted, and self-sacrificing than Falconer. But when she knew him always ready to give up his most important business, or his greatest pleasure, for her slightest comfort or convenience; when she knew how anxiously he thought for her, studied for her; when she knew that his deep interest in her had already given to his young brow the gravity of years; when she witnessed his distress and anxiety if she did but take a little cold, look pale, or seem more depressed than usual, she could not



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bear to grieve his jealous, unreasonable love, by resisting his will, or asserting her own independence. For she felt that if he loved her with the selfish exacting passion of a jealous lover, he cherished her with the tender, disinterested affection that resembled the devotion of a mother to her child, incompatible as these two manifestations often certainly were.

And there was something still more essentially necessary to Sylvia than her own freedom—it was Falconer's affection. She liked to be free; but still better she liked to be loved and cherished—the old hereditary curse (or blessing?) laid upon Eve, the woman's desire to be loved and cherished, which shall prove too strong for her love of freedom; which shall inevitably give her husband or lover the "rule over her," all the conventions in the world to the contrary notwithstanding.

Their life at the cottage was rather a singular one; some changes had also taken place in that little family besides the death of its gentle mistress, and the growing up of the children.

Old Abishag had fallen into dotage and imbecility, and had been removed from the kitchen to a comfortable cabin near at hand, where she sat over the fire all day long, picking wool, the only employment she was equal to now, and croning old songs in a low, monotonous key. Aunt Moll, grown too old for field labor, took her place as cook in the kitchen. Big Len, too infirm for the plough, confined his work to the garden. Their only field hands were now Little Len and Young Moll, a strapping, able-bodied pair as ever lived, counting only for two at best. Consequent upon this failure of their laborers, the revenues of the little stony farm were at a lower ebb than ever before.

Had Falconer himself been a good farmer, his agricultural affairs would have prospered better. But as the mother had done, so did the son; he trusted entirely to the simple, ignorant negroes, while he shut himself up in a room he called his studio, and busied himself with clay models and plaster casts, at all times and seasons, except when there was an election pending, and *then* down went chisel and hammer, copy and model, and the artist would become the orator, and "stump" the whole district,

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making fifty flaming speeches in half as many days. Poor as he was, poverty had not taught Falconer the value of time and money; he threw both recklessly away in the direction of his "genius."

Sylvia, with the housewife's instinct, tried all she could to add to the narrow income of the family. She knit beautiful little socks and mitts, of a new pattern of her own invention, and sent them to the village shop to be sold.

And Falconer guessed nothing of this, nor ever suspected where many of his comforts came from.

And often in seed time and harvest, when the labor was great and the laborers few, Sylvia would go into the field to lend her aid; and this was not inconsiderable, as you will know, when I tell you that all the *corn* that grew upon the plantation was dropped by Sylvia's fingers. Falconer was far from surmising *this*—if he had suspected it, he probably would have fallen into a greater rage than ever, though possibly the knowledge of it would have had the blessed effect of opening his eyes and engaging his interests in what was passing immediately around him.

Sylvia found time to pursue her studies and to correspond regularly with Mrs. Hunter. And it is wonderful the amount of knowledge of European geography, history, antiquities, and social manners and customs the young girl obtained from the lady's letters. Nor was that all; her letters were always full of wisdom, full of instruction and counsel suited to the maiden's sex, age, and condition, all that the fondest, most Christian mother would write to her daughter. Let no one stumble over a difficulty; for "where there is a will there is a way," and Mrs. Hunter educated Sylvia from across the ocean.

Falconer was miserably jealous of this correspondence; not but that he felt and understood its influence upon Sylvia to be a good one, but he was jealous of *all* influence over her, not emanating from himself.

Mr. and Mrs. Lovel still resided at Howlet Hall. The fair young couple were amply blessed with "the blessings happy

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peasants have," in the form of half a dozen pretty little creatures, alternating girls and boys, like Queen Victoria's children. Mrs. Lovel never found time or opportunity of getting over to Silver Creek; but Sylvia, innocent of etiquette, and unsuspicious of neglect, frequently went over to the Hall, where she was always a welcome visitor. A fond, superstitious labor of love carried the maiden thither so often, to open and air Mrs. Hunter's private apartments, with all their rooms, closets, and wardrobes. Ever since the lady had been absent, the young girl had assumed this duty so exclusively to herself, that Mrs. Lovel, after once giving her leave, never thought of interfering or participating in it. And if Mrs. Hunter had suddenly appeared at home at any hour of the day or night, she would have found her rooms ready to receive her.

Sylvia's visits to the Hall were as little to Falconer's taste as her correspondence with Mrs. Hunter, and even less so. If she *must* write to Mrs. Hunter, why she *must*, he supposed; but why should she go toadying over to the Hall? She could get no good there, he said. In the company of such a superfine lady as Mrs. Lovel, she would only learn to despise all true worth in man or woman that was not emblazoned over with the splendor of wealth or rank, i. e., she might learn to compare Falconer himself with polished gentlemen of society, who sometimes found their way to the Hall, though never by any chance to Silver Creek. Falconer thought that the lovely girl had only to be seen in order to be worshipped. Could the boy only once have had the opportunity of fairly comparing himself with those dreaded Adonises of the great world, he might have felt easier; for none could have successfully competed with the free-limbed, eagle-eyed young mountaineer.

Once during a visit the maiden paid at Howlet Hall, she had met a city portrait painter, who was staying there for the purpose of taking the likenesses of Mrs. Lovel's pretty children; he had expressed a desire of taking the portrait of the beautiful girl, and Mrs. Lovel had kept Sylvia at the Hall for several days for that purpose. When Falconer learned the cause that had

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detained her, he fell into the most ungovernable rage with the painter, with Mrs. Lovel, with himself, with fate, with everything, circumstances and person, except Sylvia; for in all these things he sinned not in charging the maiden foolishly. You must not blame the boy too harshly; there was nothing in his circumstances to correct his jealousy; indeed, from his birth up no fault of his had ever been corrected; and time must discipline the nature that hitherto has been neglected. His sister was his own precious, priceless, diamond of the mine—too precious almost to look upon—which seeing, all must covet, must seek to filch from him; he thought and feared. He especially dreaded the return home of Mr. and Mrs. Hunter; they would settle at the Hall; with their hospitable disposition, and their numerous and distinguished connection, they would fill their house with company; and with their fancy for Sylvia—and oh! how much that would be heightened when they should see her transcendant beauty; they would have her always with them—she would be thrown at once into the whirl of society; she would be carried away, and he himself left to go to the demon. He felt this, and feared their return, and thanked Providence when circumstance after circumstance arose to detain them abroad. And when Daniel Hunter was sent to Russia, Falconer benevolently wished that he might be sent thence to Siberia, before ever he should turn his steps homeward.

One evening, about the middle of November, Sylvia was sitting and knitting alone in the little parlor where erst Ellen sat and knitted. The tea-table was ready, the fire burning brightly, and the tea-kettle singing before it. Sylvia was restless, and jumped up often to look out where the light of the setting sun and the rising moon fell from opposite points upon the running creek, between the sombre rocks; but not upon sun or moon, mountain or river, was Sylvia looking now with any other emotion than the wish for her brother's return from the post-office, perchance with a letter from Mrs. Hunter. The watched-for seldom come; but when she gave up looking, and sat quietly down to her work to wait, then the latch of the door was lifted,



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and Falconer came in. He threw the expected letter in her lap. It bore a foreign stamp. She tore it open and devoured its contents with a countenance that grew brighter and brighter as she read. She finished it with an exclamation of joy—

"Oh, Mrs. Hunter! she is coming home, Falconer! she is coming home! I am so, *so* happy!"

With a sound between a sigh and a grunt, Falconer tossed his hat from him, threw himself into a chair, and dropped his head into his hands, over which his raven locks fell like a fringe.

"Why, what is the matter, Falconer? Are you tired? Does your head ache? Aunt Molly, come and fill up the tea-pot. Does your head ache, Falconer?"

"No, my heart aches. Don't trouble yourself about me, Sylvia. You'll be ashamed of it some of these days when you get over yonder, and see some splendid, magnificent fellow or other, who will be wanting to make a great lady of you."

"Oh! Falconer; but you are tired and sulky, you young bear, you."

"Ah! *that's* it! I knew I was a young bear! an unlicked cub! I always knew you thought so!"

"*Why, Falconer!* But you are in one of your—never mind, you will feel better when you get a cup of tea. Come along, Aunt Molly."

"Sylvia, I asked you not to trouble yourself about me. *Tea* will do me no good. I am not so much under the dominion of the material as that comes to, either. Besides, I could not swallow a mouthful any more than if I had the hydrophobia."

"You needn't come yet, Aunt Molly. Falconer! what *is* the matter?"

"I never saw a creature like a girl! If I happen to be depressed, you must fidget me and make me worse."

This petulance was so unlike the usual profound earnestness of Falconer's nature, that it struck the maiden as unreal, assumed; and she broke down into a silvery, musical laugh.

Falconer started up, pushed his chair behind him, and strided

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up and down the floor in great excitement. She watched in perplexity his most unreasonable agitation, and after a little while inquired in a gentle, sad tone,

"Falconer, are you not pleased because Mr. and Mrs. Hunter are coming home?"

"Pleased!" he exclaimed, pausing abruptly in his hasty walk; "*no*, you know I am not pleased. You know I hate, detest, *abhor* the very *name* of that man, and you ask me if I am not '*pleased!*'"

"But Mrs. Hunter, Falconer—?"

"What is she to us, or what are we to her? She is like her husband. They are *all* of a piece, renegade republicans! upstart aristocrats! Away with them! We don't want them here! Let them stay where they are; it suits them better. Let them sun themselves in the glare of foreign courts!" he exclaimed in bitter scorn and anger. His violent temper often alarmed the maiden very much, but she could not let this pass. It would not be right, she felt. She replied gently, but firmly,

"There is no one in the world more worthy of love, honor and reverence than Daniel Hunter and his dear, lovely—yes, *adorable lady!* There is no one under Heaven that I love and honor and reverence so much as them."

He stood and gnawed his under lip, and glared at her till a circle of white flamed around his dark orbs, and chokingly exclaimed,

"You—you do! You—you avow it!"

"I should deserve to die, if I did not," replied Sylvia, firmly still, though she turned pale.

He started and flung himself out of the house, banging the door behind him with a force that shook the rafters. And what became of him for the next two or three hours no one knew, but his own evil demon.

Sylvia waited some time for her brother's return; but as he did not come, and she had no inclination to take her tea alone, and she thought the old people in the kitchen would want theirs, she called Aunt Moll to come and take away the service. When

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the old lady came in and began to put up the tea-cups, and saw that they had not been used, she said,

"Hi! honey—what for you no take your tea? 'Cause young Marse puttin' on airs? Tsha! who de debbil mine *he?* Must think hissef some sort o' man. Been tryin' to walk over we-dem, ever since his mother put him in his first pair o' breeches; 'deed has *he*, I 'member of it well! 'Deed, Lord knows I does think it is the misfortunatest thing that ever was, for a young youth not to have anybody to make him 'have himself. *You* could, if you would."

"Me, Aunt Molly?"

"Go 'way from here! you *know* you could! He lub you so much, he done turned a fool! He so jealous, he dunno which way to put hisself. Don't you suffer no nonsense now! Bimeby he sorry for how he's 'haved hisself. He come back here penitent. Don't you have nothin' 'tall to say to him. Don't speak to him for a week. When you pours out his cup o' coffee, shove it at him like you didn't care whether he took it or not—nothin' 'tall 'bout him, and look 'tother way, and pet the cat. Dey can't bear dat; it puts der pipe out, 'rectly. Dat's de way I had to break old man Len in!"

"Oh, Aunt Molly—how *can* you say that of Uncle Len. I am sure I think he is *so good*, and always was."

"Well, chile, so he was—toler'ble—toler'ble—de dear ole cherubim! But Lor', chile, de *best* o' de creeturs—even de *best* o' um!"

The old woman was making a cup of tea while saying this, and now she brought it to Sylvia, and put one arm coaxingly around her shoulders, and held the cup almost to her lips, asking her to drink it for her ole aunty. And Sylvia laughed, and took the offered refreshment. Then the old creature, in better spirits, cleared away the tea service, and drew the work-stand and foot-stool to her mistress's chair, set a candle upon the stand, and bade her good-night. Sylvia was knitting a set of white lamb's-wool clock-stockings for Mrs. Lovel's little children. She was still busy in counting and turning the pretty fantastical meshes, when the door opened quietly, and Falconer came in. He closed

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the door, and as she looked up, he came to her, and sank down on the carpet by her side, and laid his head on her lap—just as he had often in similar circumstances laid it on his mother's. And Sylvia bent over him, running her fingers through his raven locks with the same smoothing tenderness that Ellen had always shown.

"Sylvia," he said, "do you remember the promise you made my mother on her death-bed? Sylvia, why don't you answer me? Speak to me."

"Surely, I remember it, and surely I will keep it, Falconer."

"Sylvia, will you redeem that promise to-morrow? Will you set me at rest forever? Oh, speak, Sylvia! You are so slow to answer! Will you redeem that promise?—your promise given to my dying mother, to-morrow?"

"I cannot to-morrow, Falconer," said Sylvia, gently.

"Cannot! You can! You must, Sylvia! *Indeed, indeed*, you must!"

"Indeed, I cannot, Falconer! Pray, do not urge me!"

"WHY can you not, then, if you will be so good as to tell me?"

"Falconer," she replied, a little reproachfully, "haven't I told you, long ago, that I never wished to give myself away before Mrs. Hunter came back?"

"Mrs. Hunter again! What, in the name of all the angels, has Mrs. Hunter to do with you, or you with Mrs. Hunter? Do you *belong* to her? tell me that."

"No—I wish to heaven I did! but she has expressed a wish that I should not—should not—"

"Should not be married until her return?"

"Yes, Falconer."

"Selfish, heartless, designing woman!—she has some evil purpose in that!"

"FALCONER!" exclaimed Sylvia, and, choking before she could utter another word, she burst into tears.

"Forgive me, Sylvia! forgive me! I am mad when I get upon the subject of the Hunters, and miserable when I think of losing you! I dread—I know not what—from their arrival—from

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their influence over you! I know how it will be; they will interfere between us; they will tell you that I am a mad fellow, a ringleader of mobs, a radical, moon-struck maniac, doomed to get his fiery brains blown out, if he comes to no worse fate! *Worse fate?* Ah! there! Ah! God! They will tell you—they will tell you—"

"What will they tell me—what *can* they tell me that can separate us? I belong to myself, and can give myself to whom I please, and I promise myself to you. Now, what can they tell me to separate us?" she asked, in a tone of ineffable tenderness.

"They will tell you—they will tell you—that which I ought to have told you long ago—that which I ought to tell you now—that which I WILL tell you, though the words cleave my heart in two! Sylvia, I AM THE SON OF A MAN WHO WAS HANGED!"

She gave a sudden bound, clasped his hands tightly, and then grew still.

He continued, speaking rapidly,

"There! there! *that* was my shame! my grief! my agony! *That* was what turned my heart into a hell, and made me half a maniac! *That* made me your oppressor, Sylvia, for I loved you madly! madly! and with that shameful secret kept from you! Yes, my father was hanged! Every one in the county knew it but you! *That* was the reason why I debarred you from all young society, lest you should learn it from them! I feared to tell you, lest I should lose you! for I loved you so madly, so selfishly, that it made me a coward and a hypocrite! I, who could lead a multitude which way I willed. I was a very slave or petty tyrant in your presence! *That* was the reason why I never urged our marriage—for, with all my criminal hesitation, I never designed to marry you without telling you! You have my secret! Thank God, I have been able to tell it at last! And now, Sylvia, while my good angel is strong within me, I release you from your promise! You are free, Sylvia." And he began to arise from his knees.

But she clasped his hands and detained him, gazing with her heavenly eyes upon his troubled face. And her words fell like heavenly blessing on his ears.

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"I do not now even ask you whether your father was innocent or guilty. But I tell you that, to-morrow, if you please, I will go to church with you and become your wife."

"Sylvia! Sylvia! are you crazy?" exclaimed Falconer, starting up and in a tone of voice indescribable, from its blending of doubt with unutterable joy.

"No, my poor, dear harrassed boy—my boy who would be a giant if he had but faith. I am in earnest—I will be your wife to-morrow!"

"Oh, my dear Sylvia! Yes! if I had had but faith even in *you* to have told you my secret sorrow before, how much anguish it had saved me! And you never gave Mrs. Hunter the promise she wished to exact!"

"She did not wish to exact a promise. She said she hoped I would not marry until she got home. *I* offered to bind myself by a promise not to do so; but oh! mark the lady's goodness! she would not let me! She said she felt that in any case where her known wishes were not strong enough to restrain me, I ought not to be restrained at all!"

"Oh! my dear—my dear Sylvia! Can it be possible, that to morrow—to-morrow you will be mine for ever!"

"Yes. Yours for ever!"

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE MIDNIGHT VISIT.

Breathes there a man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
"This is my own, my native land!"
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burned,
As home his footsteps he hath turned,
From wandering on a foreign strand.—*Scott.*

On a fine evening in December, 18—, the pier at Baltimore was thronged with a multitude of people, all waiting in anxious

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expectation for the appearance of the Winged Arrow steamboat from Norfolk.

The cause of this assembly was a newspaper report that Daniel Hunter, who had arrived from Europe at Norfolk by the United States frigate Liberty, would reach the city that afternoon.

The sun had already set, but the full moon poured a flood of splendid radiance on the water, making it shine like a sea of flowing silver.

The Winged Arrow was several hours due, and expectancy had reached its most anxious height, when a gentleman with a pocket-telescope, looking far down the river, discerned the coming steamer.

And soon after, the handsome private carriage, sent by the proprietor of the Eagle House, made its way through the throng of hackney coaches that crowded the wharf, and drew up as near as possible to the landing place.

Swiftly, yet not swiftly enough for the impatience of the multitude, passed the half hour that brought the steamboat near enough for the crowd of passengers to be seen upon its burdened deck. And there in the midst stood the desire of all eyes—

Daniel Hunter, with his noble head uncovered, his fine countenance irradiated with the joy of coming home to friends, to native soil, and to fellow citizens. There he stood, with a presence so princely, so majestic, so inexpressibly sovereign and gracious, that all, even his bitterest enemies, must have been struck with admiration. A lady of imperial mien hung upon his arm, and another younger pair stood behind him, but no one noticed them. But as soon as the boat touched the quay, and Daniel Hunter stepped upon the wharf, a thousand heads were uncovered, a thousand arms waved aloft, and a thousand voices shouted—

"Welcome! Welcome, Daniel Hunter!" "Welcome, heart of oak!" "Welcome to native land!"

The shout was repeated, it was reiterated, until the very heavens ran back the joyous greeting!

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The great statesman had long before been accustomed to such enthusiastic popular demonstrations. But never had the people's love thrilled him with so much heartfelt joy as now that it welcomed him on his return home. His bosom was full, was overflowing with emotion—he must address them—as the third shout died away he lifted his hand for silence, and in an instant all was still as death, waiting in reverent expectancy for his first words. And as he slowly turned his commanding glance over that multitude, and recognized here and there, with unutterable emotion, some dear, old, faithful friend, or zealous partisan, he spoke; he began by saying that his heart was at the flood, and must find its utterance as it could.

But even as these words fell from his lips, he was interrupted in an unexampled, in a most shameless manner:—

A sharp, ringing HISS-SS-SS-SS ran, winding its rapid, tortuous course, as it were, near the ground, until it arose into a yell, an absolute yell of scorn, hatred and derision! And maddened howls of—"Down with the renegade republican!" "Down with the aristocrat!" "Down with the courtier!" "Down with Daniel Hunter!" "Hurrah for Falcon O'Leary!" "Hurrah for the Young Eagle of the Alleghanies!" "Down with Daniel Hunter!" burst upon his astonished ears! But his friends furiously took up his cause, and shouts of "Hurrah for Daniel Hunter!" "Down with the Falcon!" "Down with the foul bird!" "Daniel Hunter and Democracy," mingled with yells of "Falcon O'Leary and Freeman's Rights!"

"DANIEL HUNTER AND DEMOCRACY!" rolled in thunder over the heads of the multitude, and quite overpowered all other cries, until, in a lull, a single voice shouted out in derision—"Daniel Hunter and diamond studs. Away with him! Those that wear rich clothing dwell in king's houses!" And then the shouts arose again—"Away with the aristocrat!" "Away with the courtier!" "Falcon O'Leary and Freemen's Rights for ever!" until from shouts and yells they took to cudgels and brickbats, and a general melee ensued.

Meanwhile what was the great statesman about? There is



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usually *nothing* that astounds a popular idol so much as a sudden reaction in "popular" sentiment, and a decline in "popular" favor. Not so Daniel Hunter. He always knew that just such a reaction would some time or other ensue, and for awhile prevail—that the *idolatry* of the people would be followed by the *detestation* of the people, as surely as a surfeit is followed by sickness, a feast by a fast, day by night, or autumn by winter, only he did not expect it just now—just as, after an absence of seven years, he set his foot upon his native shore. Therefore, after the first moment of surprise, and almost of incredulity, he turned to his wife, hanging upon his arm, and said,

"The hour has come—somewhat suddenly—somewhat inopportunely, love!—but the hour has come—the tide of popular favor is turning, and we must bear it as we may. Be calm."

He had need to say to her, "Be calm," for there she stood like an outraged empress—her imperial form drawn up to its haughtiest height—every limb and feature instinct with pride and scorn—her chest expanded—her fine head thrown back—her delicate lip and nostril quivering—her full eyes blazing, blazing! One burning word burst in bitterness from her indignant bosom —"INGRATES!" and then the woman remembered herself, and her cheek crimsoned.

Daniel Hunter led her to the carriage waiting to receive them —placed her in—directed the young lady and gentleman of their party to follow her, closed the door, and ordered the coachman to drive off, while he himself remained to face the storm.

It raged furiously now! Hoots and howls, and yells and curses, and brickbats and cudgels fell like hailstones!

Daniel Hunter cast his eyes around for a favorable point from which to command the multitude, his glance fell upon a heaped up pile of merchandise in boxes—stepping from point to point, he reached the top, and stood with his feet at the level of their heads. He folded his arms and stood perfectly still, a target for all eyes and missiles, waiting calmly to take advantage of the first transient lull to address them. And then his voice rang its clarion notes over the multitude, commanding silence.

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And all eyes were turned on him, and as at the presence and voice of a demi-god, the infuriated mob became the listening audience. Yes! The fiery young Falconer O'Leary could, by fierce eloquence of *passion*, at any time excite the mob—but only Daniel Hunter, coming down upon them with his massive power of *mind*, could quell one. They listened—his friends with deep respect for his words—his enemies "out of curiosity"—*they afterwards explained*—to hear what the d——d renegade had to say for himself." At all events they listened becomingly while he spoke to them for more than half an hour, at the end of which time he dispersed his enemies, and what was much more difficult, his *friends*, quietly to their homes.

And then he called a hackney coach, entered it, and directed to be driven to his hotel. There he found another crowd waiting his arrival, but coming as he did, he passed unknown among them, and entered the house, every passage, hall, parlor, reading-room and dining-room of which was filled with people waiting to greet the great statesman. Muffled in his cloak, with his traveling cap drawn down over his eyes, he passed through these also, and gained his private apartments, where Mrs. Hunter, Miss Honoria, Sir Henry Percival, and several chosen friends remained to receive him.

Their welcome, indeed, was cordial and heart-strengthening. Supper was placed upon the table in an adjoining private parlor, and he sat down with his family and some half-dozen intimate friends. And the meal was discussed in cheerful enjoyment, until the crowd outside, who had learned, in some manner, probably from the hackney-coachman that brought him thither, that Daniel Hunter was in the house, became vociferous. And the landlord entered the parlor and besought Mr. Hunter to come out and show himself upon the front balcony, and speak to the people, that they might separate and go home. Daniel Hunter arose from the table, and attended by his young English relative, Sir Henry Percival, and several political and personal friends, went forth upon the balcony, before which, in the street below, were assembled several thousand persons, the one-half of whom

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received him with shouts of welcome, and the other half with hisses. And here was enacted a repetition of the scene on the pier, and furious antagonism and rival party yells of "Daniel Hunter and Democracy," "Falconer O'Leary and Freemen's Rights," raged for some minutes, before even the mighty presence of the great statesman could enforce the silence and order necessary to make himself heard. Then he addressed them in a speech of some twenty minutes' length, and dismissed them to their homes. Lastly he retired to his own apartments, where his more intimate personal friends, perceiving his fatigue, considerately bade him good-night, and left him to his much-needed repose. Repose? No! for scarcely had the door closed behind the latest departing visitor, before it opened again, and one of the hotel waiters entered, and laid a card upon the table before him. He took it up with a wearied air, and read—

"Dr. James Ross, resident physisian to the M—— Institute for the Insane, presents his respectful regards to Mr. Hunter, and requests the honor of an immediate interview, upon business of the greatest importance, that will not admit of delay.'

Daniel Hunter turned the card about in his hand, with a look of surprise and vexation, muttering to himself—

"'Dr. Ross?'" What can he want of me, at this unreasonable hour? 'Business of the greatest importance.' What can it be?"

Then to the waiter—

"Show the doctor up at once, sir."

And the man bowed and withdrew, and soon returned, followed by the physician.

Mr. Hunter arose to meet his visitor

"You will pardon this inopportune call, I am sure, sir, when I have communicated to you its purpose," said Doctor Ross.

Daniel Hunter bowed, and offering a chair, begged his new guest to be seated.

"Pardon me—but it is necessary that our interview be a pri-

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vate one," said the physician, glancing at Sir Henry Percival and the two ladies.

"As you please, sir. John! take lights, and show us into another parlor," said Mr. Hunter.

The waiter led the way into an adjoining apartment, set lights upon the table, stirred the fire, and departing, closed the door, and left the gentlemen alone.

"Mr. Hunter, I have been for the last month waiting for your return with the most feverish anxiety. I should most certainly have written to you, had there been a possibility of my letter reaching you, or hurrying your arrival," said Doctor Ross.

Daniel Hunter listened with surprise and attention.

"Yet now that I sit before you, sir," continued the physician, "I scarcely know how to open my business—it is so strange—so unaccountable—so unexampled in real life."

"Pray proceed, sir."

"It is really so astonishing—so incredible—I hardly know how to go on in this case—it really makes one feel like being taken for an impostor."

"Take courage, doctor! it is not likely that I shall suppose you to be one," said Daniel Hunter, smiling.

"I know—but really this case—However, it is best to plunge into it at once, I believe! Mr. Hunter, do you remember the name of O'Leary?"

Daniel Hunter changed color, exclaiming,

"O'Leary! What of him?" And then recovering himself, as with another less painful recollection, he said, gaily, "Oh! *you* allude to the young mob-orator, Falcon O'Leary, whose name certainly found its way to me through the papers, even across the ocean. Yes, certainly, his name is not new to me! What of him?"

"Nothing of *him*. I know little—and with deference—care less about that young stump orator. But you remember during your first administration as Governor of M——, some sixteen years ago, a man by the name of William O'Leary, who was con-



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victed of the murder of Burke, and for whom great exertions were made to procure his pardon."

"And which I refused to grant. Yes, I remember that," said Daniel Hunter, with the same dark, troubled look coming into his face.

"Well, sir, it was one of those inevitable errors for which imperfect laws are alone accountable. We all understand that—the man died a victim to circumstantial evidence. Too late his guiltlessness was made manifest. But, sir, you may also remember that the poor fellow had a mother—a woman of strong passions, high spirit, and violent temper?"

"Yes, I remember her perfectly, and her interview with myself distinctly."

"You doubtless, then, recollect that when you disregarded her tears and prayers, and refused to grant the pardon of her son, she called down upon the head of you and yours a dreadful curse, and bound her soul by a vow of vengeance."

"No, I do not remember that—if she did such a thing, probably I disregarded it as the mere raving of a poor, mad, old woman."

"*She* remembered it, however!" said the doctor, solemnly.

"I do not understand you, sir."

"I say that that wretched woman remembered her vow, and accomplished it."

Daniel Hunter fixed his eyes in stern inquiry upon the face of his visitor, who continued,

"Some months succeeding the execution of her son, you lost your only child—as it were, by a sharp and sudden stroke of fate."

"Our child was lost—drowned in the Severn. You do not mean to tell me that that wretched maniac destroyed her?" asked Daniel Hunter, in a tone of almost supernatural steadiness and composure.

"No, sir! Heaven forbid! I do not mean to say that she destroyed the child, or that it was destroyed at all. Mr. Hunter, your infant daughter was not drowned, but stolen!"

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All self-restraint—all composure was gone now! Daniel Hunter started up and seized both hands of the doctor, and gazed in his face in a very agony of speechless inquiry. And when he found his voice, he asked, huskily,

"Stolen? Where is she now? *does she live?* and how? where? Oh, Augusta! oh, my wife! Doctor, *why* don't you answer me?"

"Mr. Hunter, my dear sir, I do not know if your daughter be alive now; let us hope she is, and that she may be discovered."

Daniel Hunter threw himself into his chair, and having completely mastered his emotion, said,

"I beg you, sir, to inform me how you came by the knowledge of the facts you have just imparted to me: that I may be the better able to judge of them."

"Assuredly, sir. This woman, Norah O'Leary, has been an inmate of the asylum under my charge, for the last fifteen years. At intervals she has returns of reason, but never for a sufficient length of time to warrant her discharge. I always imagined that there was remorse, as well as sorrow, at the foundation of her malady—for she would often rave of a crime committed, and of a sweet and noble lady whom she had bereaved—and of a stolen child; but in her lucid intervals, if this was alluded to by me, for the sake of drawing out the truth, she would laugh in a most malignant, defiant, triumphant manner. Within the last six months, however, her bodily health has failed very rapidly; and, as is often the case in similar circumstances, as her physical strength declined her mind recovered its tone, cleared and settled. From time to time, she has dropped words, that, put together, have revealed to me the fact of her theft of the child. But she refuses to give me any connected account of the crime, and inquires piteously for Mrs. Hunter. I am convinced that from some idiosyncrasy or other, she finds herself unable to confess to any but Mrs. Hunter. Within the last month she has failed so rapidly as to make it certain her death is near. I dreaded it would take place before your arrival. To-night one of my young

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students happening to be walking with me in the lobby near the door, chanced to speak of your arrival, and of the crowd that had gathered to receive you. She heard the news, and became so excited that I was obliged to administer powerful sedatives. She prayed that Mrs. Hunter might be brought to her. And, sir, it is for that purpose that I left her to come to you, late as it is, fatigued as you are; for I do not think the wretched invalid has many hours to live."

Daniel Hunter grasped the doctor's hand in silent emotion, and arose with the purpose of going to break this to his wife, but the connecting door opened, and Mrs. Hunter entered, pale as ivory, and holding out her hands like one blind and in danger of falling, until she met and threw herself upon her husband's bosom, exclaiming,

"Oh, Mr. Hunter, we have heard it all! Oh, don't you know who it is? It is Sylvia! It is Sylvia! I *always felt* it, but *never knew* it! Oh, why was it we never knew our angel child?"

Daniel Hunter pressed her to his bosom in unutterable emotion, and sat her down in a lounging chair. Then turning, he rang the bell, and ordered a carriage. And ten minutes after—late as it was—Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, and the doctor, entered the vehicle, and were driven to the asylum.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE MANIAC'S CELL.

Remorse drops anguish from her burning eyes
Feels hell's eternal worm, and shuddering, dies.—*Sprague.*

A RAPID drive of twenty minutes brought them to the lunatic asylum. They alighted and entered its gloomy portals, and, led by the doctor, passed up its long passages and dimly-lighted staircases to an upper hall, flanked on both sides by rows of cells.

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All was very quiet in this department—the few inmates of the cells seemed to be asleep, and the shaded lamp that hung from the ceiling shed a cheerful light over the scene. The physician paused before one of the doors, opened it cautiously, and beckoned some one out. A hospital nurse appeared at his summons.

"How is your patient?"

"In one of her death-like sleeps."

"How long has it lasted?"

"Upwards of two hours."

"She will awake before long," said the doctor, and then, turning to Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, he said, "we can enter."

"But should she suddenly awake and find us by her side, might not the shock be dangerous?"

"No, madam. She has been led to expect you; besides, you need not appear suddenly."

The physician held open the door, and allowed Mrs. Hunter to pass in, and then followed with Mr. Hunter.

It was a fair-sized, comfortable apartment, better deserving the name of chamber than cell. The doctor placed chairs at the foot of the bedstead, and quietly motioned his companions to be seated, while he himself took his station near the head. Daniel Hunter and his wife looked upon the patient extended before them.

She lay stretched out at full length upon her back, with a white quilt spread over her, like one dead. Her head was bare and her gray hair cut close for coolness, though the night was so cold. Mrs. Hunter gazed upon the body with a shudder of horror, of incredulity, that a thing still breathing should be such an inconceivable wreck, should look worse than an Egyptian mummy. As she lay, all her joints were prominent, almost pointed, beneath the coverlet, as those of a skeleton might have been, and her sunken eyes, and the dark, livid skin clinging closely round the bones of her forehead and jaws, made dark, cavernous hollows of her cheeks and eye-sockets. Mrs. Hunter turned sickened away.

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"She had a powerful, a wonderful constitution; the disease has fed upon and consumed almost every atom of flesh, and yet, you see, her brain acts, her lungs still breathe, her heart still beats,—it is stupendous!" said the doctor, in a low voice. "But hush-h—she wakes—turn a little further aside, dear madam, if you please; I will speak to her," he added.

But it was too late; Norah had seen and recognized the lady at the foot of her bed.

"*Ah-h-h!* you have come at last!" she murmured, in a hollow tone, and her voice sounded like a far-off moan from a graveyard.

Augusta turned again, and met her fiery eyes fixed upon her, and glowing like two live coals in a skull. Yes, all the life left in the body burned in those terrible eyes! The lady shaded hers with a shudder. A hollow, dying laugh followed the movement, and Norah said,

"Oh, you needn't shrink *now*—the time has passed—the arrow has been sped—it transfixed its victim long ago! Come to me, I can draw it out; it was never meant for you!"

She held up her skeleton arms to the lady, and then, prostrated, dropped them.

Mrs. Hunter came around to the side of her bed. The doctor made way for her, and retired. The lady bent over the dying woman. But the poor wretch looked up at her with an expression in which diabolical malice still struggled with remorse and fear and compassion, until the countenance grew frenzied. The lady laid her calming hand, and fixed her pitying eyes upon the patient, and said, in her sweet, gentle voice,

"Norah, if you have anything to say to me, say it now. You will have peace when you have said it."

"Ha, ha, ha! Ain't you glad the spirit will *make* me tell? Ain't you glad it maddened me? It killed me?"

"God knoweth that I am not, Norah. I am profoundly sorry for you. I shall be happy if, by penitence, you can obtain peace."

"Penitence!" cried the dying woman, with kindling eyes.

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"Penitence for the only thing in which I rejoice! Yes, *rejoice!* ha, ha, ha! Penitence! and with *that* man in the room! Take him out! Take him out! I cannot *breathe* in the same place with him! Take him out! If I were on the very threshold of Heaven, and I saw that man going on before me, I should turn back and go to—"

"—*Hush-sh-sh!* You mustn't say that, my poor woman!" interposed the doctor. "You mustn't say such dreadful things as that! You must forgive your enemies, you know."

"*Forgive!* Ha, ha, ha! Oh, you foolish old man! That anybody should live sixty or seventy years in this world, and get lint white hair on their heads, to talk such arrant nonsense! *There's* a man who knows better! Ask *him* if *now* my heart can be changed, and I can '*forgive*' forsooth! Ha, ha, ha!"

"But, my dear soul, you *must* forgive! You know that unless we forgive men their trespasses, neither will our heavenly Father forgive us ours," said the physician.

"Forgive! Forgive *him!* I tell you, old man, that if God never forgives *me* until I forgive *him*, I shall go straight to everlasting fire, and—"

"Sh-sh-sh-sh! *My dear lady*, you must not say such shocking things! Conscience alive! you make one's hair bristle up!"

"Ha, ha, ha! I tell you *there's* a man who knows I cannot forgive! Ask *him* if my heart can change at this hour! And take him out! I tell you he *stifles* me! I tell you I cannot *breathe* the air he breathes!"

With a look of the deepest commiseration Daniel Hunter had stood near the foot of the bed. Now he turned to leave the room.

"Do not mind her, sir, she raves," said the physician.

But Daniel Hunter only replied by an inclination of the head, as he retired and closed the door behind him.

"Go with him, doctor. You are a well-meaning old gentleman, only silly out of the line of your profession. Are you going? I tell you I want to be alone with the lady."

The physician, with a deprecatory groan, got up, beckoned the

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nurse, and, followed by her, stumped out of the room. Left alone, the dying woman turned her burning gaze upon Augusta.

The lady thought best not to open the conversation. She contented herself with laying her hand upon the darkened forehead, and looking kindly in the harrassed eyes of the sufferer. Norah was too far gone, too exhausted, too confused to attempt anything like a connected narrative—her speech would have been incoherent to one not possessed of the clue—her emotions and expressions were often contradictory and inconsistent. She fixed her fiery eyes upon the lady, and drove their piercing glances deep into her very soul; but reading there nothing but pity, love and sorrow, she dropped her lids, sheathing their burning gaze, and said camly,

"I never wished to harm you, sweet and noble lady—but *him!* Oh! he did me a horrible injury!"

"You have suffered a terrible wrong by a cruel law. My husband was its fated executor. I do not defend him. He does not defend himself. But he has suffered only less than you. There is a world that rectifies all that has gone wrong in this. You are very near its bourne. Had you passed the happiest, instead of the most unhappy life, it would be all the same to you now. Think of that. But what is essential—what will make all the difference—is the spirit in which you will pass away. Do not be obdurate. Do not be unforgiving."

"And do not you talk nonsense to me, gentle lady. I cannot change my heart."

"The Lord can change it. Pray to him."

"I cannot, lady. It were hypocrisy."

"Let me pray with you."

"Do not mock me, gentle lady."

"Heaven forbid. Let me pray with you. Let me kneel by you, and hold your hands in mine, and pray with you. Come! you are not so hard as you seem. You are softening now. God waits to pardon and bless you. Angels hover around your bed, to see what you will do."

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"One angel does, lady. But concern yourself with your child, lady. Why don't you ask about *her?*"

"Because I am satisfied about my child; I know all that is necessary to be known."

"Ah! you do! who told you?"

"Your words and actions, and circumstances already known to me."

"But—but you do not know *all—all?*'

"I know that in the frenzy of your grief and anger, when you forgot God, and could not hear what your better spirit said, you took away my little child, and gave her a new name—called her Sylvia Grove, and gave her to your daughter-in-law, Ellen," said the lady, gently.

"Yes, yes, yes," muttered Norah to herself, with a perplexed look, "and yet you do *not* know all!"

"No!" suddenly exclaimed Mrs. Hunter, as a spasm of pain convulsed her beautiful countenance; "there is one thing I must ask you—was *Ellen* a party to the—I mean, did Ellen know *whose* child it was, that you committed to her care?"

"No, no—oh, no! she never even suspected it, I am sure."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Augusta, fervently.

"Oh, it would have hurt you more if Ellen had been so wicked? Poor Ellen—she has not been to see me a long time, it seems to me."

"Mrs. Hunter did not think proper to inform the sufferer of her daughter-in-law's death. She said:

"And now I am satisfied about my child. She has grown up a good and beautiful maiden; she has received no harm from the act that I feel sure you have repented. Now think of yourself."

"Oh, yes! I *do* repent of *taking her from you.* Towards *him* I have no repentance—*none!* But towards *you*—oh! lady, I have always repented—always repented!"

"Oh, Norah, repent towards the Lord."

"But you, do you forgive me? Oh, Mrs. Hunter! that night! when hurrying through the crowd upon the shore, I bore your infant away, I heard your distant shrieks of anguish—they



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pierced my ear—they were echoed from my heart! I have heard them ever since. I have heard them in my solitude. I have heard them in the night; they have startled me from my sleep! Had I murdered you, lady, my sufferings could not have been greater! But I would not give up my vengeance. And I could not bear remorse. And between them I maddened!"

She paused, and covered her haggard face with her dark and skeleton fingers. And after a few minutes she removed her hands, and her sunken eyes blazed upon the lady's face, and she said, in an altered voice,

"I am dying, yet I cannot ask the Lord's pardon until I have obtained yours, and yours I know I shall never have. It is useless to speak of it. Gentle and noble as you are, you could not grant it, even if you would. I know by my own heart that it is impossible. For, as I cannot cease to loathe him who refused to spare my son, I feel that you cannot choose but hate me, who bereaved you of your little child!"

And with a shuddering sigh, that shook her whole frame, the wretched woman once more covered her face with her talon-like fingers.

Mrs. Hunter sank softly down on her knees by her side, and bending closely, tenderly over her, said,

"Norah, look at me. You are deluded. When you sent your glance so deeply into my eyes just now, you read no anger, no resentment there. Look up—meet my eyes again—read my heart, if you can—you will read nothing there but deep compassion for your sufferings, and earnest desire for your welfare. Norah, look up. We are children of the same Father. It is your sister that speaks to you."

The sufferer uncovered her eyes, and gazed long and wonderingly upon the lady's heavenly contenance, and then she spoke, calmly,

"I tore your young, nursing baby from your bosom, and left you to years on years of anguish, and yet you do not hate me! and yet you do not reproach me! You forgive me, you pity me, you pray for me—your countenance beams heaven's own love upon

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me—your mercy breaks down my heart. Oh, Mrs. Hunter! I can in part conceive God's mercy by yours!"

"The Lord's mercy speaks to you through me—the Lord's love inspires me—freely have I received for your sake, and freely, freely give! May it redeem you—may it bless you."

"I believe it—I believe it! Oh, Mrs. Hunter! while you hold my hand and talk to me so, and look at me, with heaven calling me through your eyes, I feel my heart changing, changing in my bosom! Oh, Mrs. Hunter! if you could stay by me—if it were possible you could stay by me—I might not then be a lost spirit."

"I will not leave you. I will remain with you till the last."

"What! Mrs. Hunter! You will stay with me!"

"Yes—be calm."

"You! in this miserable place with me!"

"Yes; for I trust in heaven to do you good."

"But your daughter! I thought you would make instant preparations to hasten to her."

"I can wait for that. God, who has watched over her all these years, and made her such a good and lovely maiden, will keep her safe till I meet her."

"Oh, how you must love her!"

"I do, more than all under heaven, except her father."

"And now you must *long* to hasten to her."

"Be calm—I do not wish to leave you."

"Heaven bless you for that! Heaven bless you!"

The conversation was interrupted by a low knock at the door. Mrs. Hunter arose and opened it. The nurse stood there with a message from Mr. Hunter, desiring to know when Mrs. Hunter would be ready to return to the hotel. The lady said that she would answer the message in person. And leaving the nurse in her place, she went down the long hall to the end, where Daniel Hunter and the doctor stood, near the stove, and drawing Mr. Hunter aside, explained to him her wish to remain near the patient until her death.

"But our child! But Maud! I have already sent to the stage office, and taken places down to Alleghany county."

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"Then go alone, Mr. Hunter. Much as I long to see our child, I cannot leave this suffering soul. When all is over, I will hasten after you."

"Augusta, you are a good woman."

"Carry my heart to Maud—tell her I am not surprised—I always felt she was my child, though I did not know it—tell her—but never mind! Speak all your own love, and she will hear mine!"

Daniel Hunter pressed her hand, saying

"I understand you. I feel all that you would have me say from you."

And then they talked over some little temporary arrangements, and took leave of each other. Mrs. Hunter returned to pray with her patient, and Daniel Hunter, leaving the young people for the present at the hotel, threw himself into the stage coach, and was rattled down to Alleghany county as fast as the old fashioned vehicle could convey him.

It was late Saturday evening when he arrived at Howlet Hall, and much too late for him to think of visiting Silver Creek that night. He found his young relatives and their little nestlings well, and the former in expectation of his whole party, and not a little disappointed at seeing him alone. He satisfied them, however, by saying that urgent business had brought him down in advance of the others, who would follow in a day or two. He did not think proper to communicate upon that night the strange discovery that had been made to him—in fact, he felt strongly opposed to hearing and answering the multitude of questions with which he felt certain the frivolous Lucy would greet the communication. He, therefore, contented himself with inquiring, in an off-hand manner, after the health and well-being of Mrs. Hunter's little favorite, Sylvia Grove, and having received a satisfactory answer, he pleaded fatigue and retired to bed. Very early the next morning he arose, ordered his horse, and hastily swallowed a cup of coffee standing, threw himself into the saddle, and galloped rapidly towards Silver Creek, whither we must precede him.

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE LOST BRIDE.

*Ol.* Blame not this haste of mine. If you mean well
Now go with me, and with this holy man
Into this chantry by; there before him,
And underneath this consecrated roof,
Plight me the full assurance of your faith;
That my most jealous and too doubtful soul
May live at peace—
*Polon.* Soft, swain, awhile;
Hath she a father? *Shakspeare.*

A SHARP, cold, clear, sparkling morning in December, with the ground covered with snow, with the sun shining dazzlingly, the creek frozen hard, the squirrels hopping through the bare woods, and flocks of snow-birds alighting on the fields.

Early Sylvia left her sleepless pillow, and never maiden arose upon her bridal morning with a heavier heart. She could not think why. She loved Falconer well—she was willing to pass her life with him—yet there lay upon her bosom a heavy weight, a vague anxiety, a sorrowful foreboding which she could neither throw off nor quite understand. She was willing to bestow her hand upon Falconer—and she was her own mistress, and had a right to do so if she pleased. So she assured herself a score of times that morning, while going through her simple toilet. And yet the reiterated thought did not satisfy her.

"I hope you will not be married till I come, for you are very young, dear child."

These words had been *written* to her by Mrs. Hunter. Yet now she seemed to hear the lady's very voice *speaking* them to her—speaking them with irresistible authority. And in what she was about to do, she felt an undefined sense of wrong and danger, which she could not reason away. As yet she had not told her domestics of her impending marriage. It was necessary now to do so. And she rapped for Aunt Moll, and soon, in answer to the signal, the old creature entered her chamber. It



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was the same chamber which had once been Ellen's, adjoining the parlor. When the old woman stood at her side, Sylvia said,

"Sit down, Aunt Moll, I have got something to tell you. Aunt Moll, we are going to be married this morning."

"For the Lord's sake, Miss Sylvia."

"Yes, Aunt Moll, you know I promised Ellen on her death-bed. Ellen joined our hands when she was dying—and I might as well redeem my promise now as at another time."

"Well! I *is* 'p'rised. Why Lor', honey, you ain't got a singly thing fixed. How de debbil you gwine git marry when you ain't got no weddin' gown nor poun' cake, nor bridesmaid, nor nothin' 'tall 'cordin'?"

"If I wait for such display and festivity, I shall never be married," said Sylvia, smiling.

"Poor thing—poor thing—no father nor mother, nor sister, nor brother to love her and care for her, and take pride in her, and get a wedding for her—and she so sweet and beautiful! No, no one even to pray 'God bless her'—when she's gwine to heave herself away on a hot-headed, high-tempered, good for nothing fellow like our young marse! Poor little thing!"

"You will be unjust to Falconer, Aunt Moll. I suppose there is no way of stopping you—but when you feel like abusing him, I wish you would abuse me also, and then I could bear it with a much better grace."

"'Buse *you! Well*, Lor'! But, honey, see here, you know I hear you say, often and often, how you didn't want to do anything o' 'portance 'out Mrs. Dan'l Hunter's 'vice—now, honey, I jes ax—has yer took her 'vice 'bout dis yer?"

"No," said the maiden, with a sigh, "but I know that if Mrs. Hunter knew my motives, she would approve my act."

"*I* dunno it, then—but I know the old saying says, 'Marry in haste and repent at leisure!'"

"I shall not repent at all, come what will," said the young girl, taking down her black silk dress, and preparing to put it on.

"High! Gemini! You ain't a-gwine to be married in *that* dress?"

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"Why not?"

"'Why not?' De Lor'! Don't you know how it would be de worsest luck in de worl'? Lor', chile, why, ef anybody wore black at your weddin' it would bring you bad luck—much more ef you wear it yesseff. Put it away, put it away! Don't think o' it, it would bring you to 'struction! perfect 'struction!"

"What, a black dress? Nonsense. I believe in Providence, not in luck. And, besides, you know I have nothing but black. I have had no new clothes since Ellen died, and I have outgrown those I had before."

"Well! don't you say I didn't do my duty, and warn yer, that's all. But you's jes as stubborn in *yer* way as young marse is in hizzen."

"Hook my dress for me, Aunt Moll."

"'Deed wont I! 'Fore Marster wont I! Think I gwine to be made injuremental to your 'struction! No!" said the old woman flinging out of the chamber, in half real, half assumed displeasure.

And Sylvia completed her toilet as well as she could alone.

A black silk gown, a black cloth shawl, and a little black silk bonnet—her usual Sunday dress—were now her wedding garments. Like a star on the edge of a dark cloud, shone her beautiful face from these shrouding draperies. She went out into the little parlor, where the breakfast table was set, and where Falconer awaited her.

The youth stood at the chimney corner, with his elbow resting on the mantel-piece, his head bowed upon his hand, and his long fingers driven through his black, elf locks. He looked little like a bridegroom—his face was haggard, as with sleeplessness and anxiety. He, too, felt a sense of wrong-doing—felt that it was an unmanly, unrighteous thing to take this advantage of the gentle girl, and draw her into a marriage that promised nothing but misery. But he would not forego his selfish passion—no—not though his bride should die heart-broken—he hurled all misgiving from him, and trampled all compunction down. He said to himself that he would do the best he could

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for Sylvia, and he could do no more; he could not change himself—"could the leopard change his spots?" A galvanic smile lit up his face as Sylvia entered, and he went and took her hand, and silently pressed it, as he led her to her seat at the table.

Aunt Moll brought in the coffee and buckwheat cakes. It was the first buckwheat of the season—and Aunt Moll was as proud of the making and baking of the cakes, as Little Len had been of raising the grain, which he said could not be matched in the state. Nevertheless, the "prime buckwheat" "went begging" that morning. The young people scarcely touched their breakfast, and soon arose from the table. The little wagon stood at the door; Falconer handed Sylvia in—entered, and took the seat at her side, and drove off.

The sparkling splendor of the winter morning—the fresh, brisk, invigorating air, the merry twittering, or hopping about of the honest hardy little denizens of the leafless woods, the snow-birds, or the squirrels, that frequently crossed their path—all contributed to enliven the spirits of our young travellers. *Then* Falconer asked—

"What were you looking so grave about, Sylvia?"

"I do not quite know, but I felt as if this were a runaway match."

"Hem-m-m! Whom are we running away from Sylvia?"

"No one, certainly, only it *seemed* so."

"From Mrs. Hunter, isn't it?"

"No, the dear lady, she is the last in the world to put a fetter on me."

"I would wager my life that if *now* Mrs. Hunter were to meet you at church, as she used to do in olden times, and if she were to tell you you had better defer marrying for some years yet, you would break with me!"

"I would not! Oh, Falconer, will you never have faith in me? Besides, Mrs. Hunter would not do such a thing, she would never ask me to break my pledged word!"

"Ah-h-h!" exclaimed the youth, drawing a hard breath.

"Oh, Falconer, do not torment yourself so—trust in me, only trust in me."

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"I *do*, when *their* influence is not exerted."

"Their influence is always a good and happy one. Oh, Falconer, *why* do you hate them so? And what puts them in such a false light to you?"

"They are my bitterest enemies."

"Never—never."

"Well! I am *theirs*, which is the same thing. And don't I know that if they should chance to be at church, to-day, they will seek to stop our marriage. Yes, and succeed too!"

"Never! never! would they seek to exert, or I succumb to such influence, to break my plighted faith!—never! Falconer! never! But what puts it into your head that they should be at church, to-day?"

"Prescience, superstition, perhaps. And perhaps *probability*."

"Probability? They are far enough from here."

"Yes, probability. Who knows but that they reached Howlet Hall some time within the last few days, and may be at church this morning. We cannot tell. We have not heard from the Hall for a week, and the letter from Mrs. Hunter bore a very old date? I tell you it is not improbable that they have returned. There! now just let any one look at your countenance! —now it lights up at the very idea of their being at church! Oh, good Heaven! This it is to love one with a divided heart!"

"Oh! Falconer, am *I* such a prize that you should be so superstitious, so fantastical, in your jealousy and dread of losing me? Oh, Falconer, be moderate."

"Give me your hand, Sylvia—pardon me. I will be moderate when you are mine beyond possibility of doubt."

"And that will be in an hour now," said Sylvia.

They journeyed on. They reached the Summit, and drove up to the church just as the Sunday-school had been taken in. The church below stairs was empty. The congregation had not even begun to assemble. Falconer alighted and secured his horse, and assisted Sylvia to descend from her seat, and they entered the church together. A little while they had to wait while Mr. Lovel concluded the opening services of the Sunday-school, and

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then Falconer sent a message to him by a late pupil who was going up.

Mr. Lovel came down and met the young pair, and shook hands with them, and when Falconer explained the business that had brought them thither, he looked surprised, amused, and turned such a quizzical glance upon Sylvia, that the maiden blushed and dropped her eyes.

"Yes, certainly," he said, "always very happy to make others happy. Oh! by the way, have you seen Mr. Hunter this morning?"

"Mr. Hunter!" exclaimed Sylvia, with the light of joy springing to her eyes.

"Mr. Hunter!" growled Falconer, grinding his teeth in rage and sorrow.

"Yes—young folks, Daniel Hunter! He reached Howlet Hall last night, and—"

"—Has *Mrs.* Hunter come?" inquired Sylvia, eagerly interrupting him.

"No, my dear, Mrs. Hunter remains for the present in Baltimore. Mr. Hunter came down alone on very important business and I fancy his business lies with one of you, for this morning, before any of us were out of bed, he ordered his horse and set out for Silver Creek. And you have not seen him? Surprising!"

"We left very early, sir. Was Mrs. Hunter well, sir?"

"Very well—she will be down in a few days."

"Will you be good enough, sir, to proceed with the business that brought us here?" asked Falconer impatiently.

"Certainly—certainly—but—where are your attendants? Have you no friends with you?"

"Is that a *necessary* form, sir?" asked the youth, coldly.

"No—no—not in this case; there are some half-dozen people just passed us, and seated themselves in their pews; they will witness the rites. Follow me!" And Mr. Lovel preceded the young couple up the aisle, entered within the railing of the altar, and took his stand in front of the reading-desk.

Sylvia and Falconer knelt before him

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The people that were in the church were roused up at this sight;—a wedding is always interesting—especially an impromptu one in a church—they were on the qui vive, and pricked up their ears for the words of the minister, and the responses of the parties—and—but we must leave them and go back an hour or two.

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When Daniel Hunter left Howlet Hall, he rode on at a brisk pace through the intervening fields between the Hall and the Barrier, but had to slacken his speed in going through the dangerous mountain pass, which long neglect and wintry weather had rendered nearly impassible. This impeded his progress, and worried and fatigued his horse, so that he could go only at a very moderate rate through the valley lying between the Barrier and the ridge of Silver Creek. And over the ridge, by reason of the washed and guttered roads, the mountain pass was still more difficult and dangerous. He was a long time getting through—and the morning was well advanced when he reached Silver Creek cottage. He alighted at the gate and walked in. There was no one in the room. Comfortable as the cottage was with its little parlor in perfect order, and cheered with a bright wood fire burning in the chimney, it had a vacant, disappointing look. With the end of his riding-whip he rapped several times on the floor before any one came. At length however, just as he was growing very impatient, Aunt Moll appeared at the kitchen-door.

Smiling and courtseying, and settling a clean handkerchief on her head, she said,

"You mus' please to 'cuse me, ef you please, marster. I was jes a puttin' on my Sunday ——. Oh! my good gracious alive, ef it ain't Marse Dan'el Hunter! Beg your pardon a thousand times, marster, I'm sure, sir! Lor! I didn' know you no more an' nothin' at all—how bline I is gettin', to be sure! Take a seat, sir!" she added, zealously wiping off a chair with her apron, and setting it to the fire. "'Deed, I *mighty* proud to see you, sir—'deed, Lord knows is I! An' how is de madam, sir!"

"Well—she is well, my good woman."

"And hansome as ever, I dare swear, sir."

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"Handsomer we think, Abishag."

"Moll, sir, my name's Aunt Moll. Sure, marster, you 'members *me*—Aunt Moll, sir, as used to tend the dairy. Ole Abishag, she's superambulated off to herself. Dear! dear! *Wont* Miss Silvy be mighty proud to hear the madam's come back! Marster, Lord knows she hasn't talked of nothing else since you done left from here."

"And how is your young mistress, Abishag?"

"*Moll*, sir. My name is Moll—'deed it is, sir, Moll."

"Well, how is your young mistress?"

"Fuss rate, sir, 'deed is she, *and purty*. Oh! I tell you!"

"Go and call her to me," said Daniel Hunter, sitting down in the chair, laying aside his hat and gloves, and stretching his feet out to the fire. "Well! why don't you go and call your mistress to me?"

"Yes, sir—jes so, sir, indeed, only she aint here."

"Not here—where is she?"

"Bless you, sir, she's gone to church. 'Deed she is, sir!—gone to church."

"Gone to church already!—it is very early for her to be gone to church. Oh! I suppose she has a class in the Sunday-school?"

"No, sir, she hasn't, sir. She *had* a nice class, 'deed had *she*. only Marse Falconer, sir, he wouldn't let her keep it."

Daniel Hunter's eyes kindled!

"Did I hear you right? What did you say, Abishag?"

"*Moll*, sir. *Moll*. Lord a massy upon me! *Moll*, sir. 'Deed. Lord *knows* it's *Moll*, sir."

"Stuff! tell me what you were saying about my daught—about your young mistress's class in the Sunday-school?"

"I was a sayin', sir—(*an' I'm Moll*)—how Miss Silvy had a class in the Sunday-school, only Marse Falconer, sir, he wouldn't let her keep it."

A crimson spot, that not the infuriated mob could have raised there, now glowed upon Daniel Hunter's dark cheek, while he kept his glittering eye fixed upon the face of the loquacious old woman, and asked,

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"But why—by what right does Mr. O'Leary interfere with Miss—with the young lady's occupations and amusements?"

"Why you see, sir, dey's 'gaged."

"*Gaged?* What? What do you mean?"

"'Gaged, sir, 'gaged to be married, sir—and Marse Falconer—she's so purty, and he's so 'fernal jealous—(axing your grace, sir,)—as he wont let her have her class in the Sunday-school for fear she'll be seen and 'mired, and made much of, and somebody might cut him out. Dey's gone to church to be married this morning."

"WHAT!" cried Daniel Hunter, starting to his feet.

"Yes, sir, dey's gone to church to be married this morning, 'fore sarvice."

"Good Heaven! and I have been wasting time here! Why didn't you tell me before? How long have they been gone?" anxiously inquired Mr. Hunter, seizing his hat and gloves.

"'Deed, sir, I didn't know as you was 'ticaler 'cerned in knowin' of it. Dey's been gone about an hour."

"Concerned in knowing it! She is my daughter!" exclaimed Daniel Hunter, throwing himself upon horseback and galloping rapidly away.

Aunt Moll gazed after him with mouth and eyes extended to their greatest capacity. At length her astonishment found utterance.

"*His darter!* Well! De Lor' have massy on these gray-headed ole sinners! An' to tell it so bare-faced to an honest, vartuous ole mudder of a fam'ly like me, ef I *is* black! Shows how much 'spect he has for me, to be 'quaintin' me wid his wices, dat's all! *His darter!* Well, who'd a thought it? I neber would o' spicioned *sich* o' Dan'el Hunter. Why, Lord, I had so much conf'dence in that man, I would o' gone wid him myself to Land's End, and neber been afraid o' losin' my correcter! Well, Lord! If we can't put no 'pendance on *his* principles, who *can* we 'pend upon? I neber *did* b'lieve in total 'pravity, no how, as I often telled Parson Lovel. Cause *why?* (I puts it to him.) Why, cause—*I* wa'n't totally 'praved *my*self,



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I *knowed* I wa'n't! and I b'lieved how *he* want totally 'praved *him*self, nuther! But now, I has my doubts! Since Dan'el Hunter's turned out a 'ceiver, I has my doubts! *His darter.* I wonder who's her mudder? Lors! I wonder if de madam knows it? Well! And as fond as she was o' de gall, too! I wonder if she'll be fond o' her *now? His darter.* Well! I allus *did see de likeness, dat's sartin!*"

And so the scandalized old woman talked by the hour, while the subject of her animadversions, never guessing the construction put upon his words, galloped rapidly on towards the Summit. He reached it in half an hour's hard riding, sprang from his horse, and hastened, breathless, into the church. There were but few people thinly scattered about in the pews.

But there, before the altar, knelt Sylvia and Falconer—and the clergyman, with his book open, was performing the marriage ceremony. Daniel Hunter hurried on; one glimpse he got of his daughter's lovely face, shining as a star in the darkness of her drapery; and with a rush of love and admiration, he exclaimed, to himself—

"Beautiful, beautiful, beautiful! She is beautiful as—her mother!"

They were all too absorbed to notice his quick approach. The minister was bending closely over them. Falconer held her left hand, and with the wedding-ring held on her finger, was repeating, after the minister, the words of the ritual—

"With this ring I thee wed—with all my worldly goods I thee endow, in the name of the—"

"HOLD! I forbid the marriage!" exclaimed Daniel Hunter, stepping up.

The clergyman looked up in amazement, to see Mr. Hunter there, and to hear him prohibit the ceremony.

Sylvia started, looked around, recognized the speaker, and clung to the altar railings for support. The wedding-ring dropped from her finger, and Falconer sprang up; his feet rebounding from the floor like steel springs; his breath drawn hard through his clenched teeth; his swollen and empurpled veins throbbing on

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his crimsoned forehead, and the white circle flaming around his darkened eyes.

"By what right, sir!" he asked, in a deep, stern, husky voice.

"By the holiest in nature, young man—a father's right," answered Daniel Hunter, composedly.

Then addressing the maiden, he said,

"Come to me, Maud Hunter. Come to me, my dear child—I am your father!"

With dilated eyes, and lips breathlessly apart, and paling cheeks, the young girl heard, and arose to her feet, and stood one moment, uncertain, amazed, bewildered, and then reeling, held out her arms to her father. But at the same moment Falconer sprang forward, and caught her to his bosom, closing his arm around her fragile form, in a close, vice-like, crushing, cruel grip.

Daniel Hunter advanced upon him, and demanded his daughter.

"No! You shall not have her! I know nothing about her being your daughter! She is *mine*—my bride—my wife. She has pledged her marriage vows to me—here—at this altar! She is mine! and even were you her father, you could not force her from me. No power on earth shall force her from me!" exclaimed Falconer.

The maiden slightly struggled to free herself, but the pressure was increased, painfully, while he glared defiance at her father.

"Do not struggle, Maud, my child; be quiet, be cool, remember the sacred roof we stand under. If he designs to enact a disgraceful scene here, in this church, he deceives himself, that is all. We will be patient with him, and when he is tired of that tragic acting, he will release you, and you will come to me," said Daniel Hunter, coolly taking a seat.

But to the surprise of all, Falconer O'Leary lifted up the maiden in his arms, and bore her down the aisle and out of the church.

Daniel Hunter calmly arose, and went after them. Mr. Lovel and one or two gentlemen from the pews followed. Falconer

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bore his bride towards the little wagon. But Daniel Hunter overtook him—clapped his strong hand upon his shoulder, wheeled him around, and said,

"See here, I bore with your insolence just now, because I did not choose to permit a disturbance in the church. We are outside now, and I command you to release my daughter; for if I have to force you to do it, you shall suffer the utmost consequences of your outrage!"

"NEVER! She is my wife? OFF, sir, I say, or do *you* take the consequences!" exclaimed the madman, and still holding Maud in a tight grip with his left arm, he put his right hand in his bosom, and drew a pistol.

"Oh! Falconer!" shrieked Maud, and she fainted away.

Daniel Hunter instantly closed upon him, and having both hands free, soon overmastered him, and wrested from his hand the pistol. He threw the weapon at a distance, and received his fainting daughter in his arms, just as an officer, reaching the spot, arrested Falconer O'Leary.

Daniel Hunter bore his daughter into the vestry-room, where, prompt assistance being rendered, she soon recovered. Mr. Lovel was present, looking very anxious.

"Is the carriage from Howlet Hall here, sir?" inquired Mr. Hunter.

"It is, sir. We came in it," answered Mr. Lovel.

"In that case, I will enter it with my daughter, and return at once to the Hall. I will send it back for you and Lucy. It shall be here by the close of the morning service."

"Do not trouble yourself, Mr. Hunter; we can easily remain in the village until evening, and dine at the hotel."

"By no means; you shall have the carriage in time, and you must join me at dinner."

"Very well, then, as you please; in the meantime, I shall endeavor to hold my curiosity in check until you can give me the explanation of this strange piece of family history."

"My dear Lovel, Dr. Channing I think it was who said, 'the *true* greatness of human life is almost always out of sight.' I

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can say the *real* romance of life is often quite as invisible! If we knew the life-history of the common-place people about us, how very much the reverse of common-place they might seem! but more of this another time."

"Shall I call the carriage for you?"

"I thank you—if you please."

Mr. Lovel went out, and Daniel Hunter, leading his feeble, pale, and trembling child, followed. The carriage drew up to the door, and Mr. Hunter placed Maud in, and was about to follow her, when he paused, drew Mr. Lovel aside, and asked,

"What has been done with that madman?"

"O'Leary? He is taken in custody."

"Get him set at liberty immediately, Lovel! Nonsense! Get him liberated instantly, poor, moon-struck fellow! I shall not appear against him. Come, can I depend upon you? Will you attend to it?"

"Yes, after morning service; there is no time now."

"Very well; thank you. Good-morning," said Daniel Hunter, getting into the carriage, and giving the order for it to move.

Maud was sobbing softly in the corner of the back seat. Mr. Hunter watched her in silence for a time, and then gently took her hand, and asked,

"Why do you weep, my dear child?"

But Maud only shook her head, and sobbed the more

"Can you not trust in me, my love?"

But Maud only pressed the hand that held hers—she could not speak.

"Is it about this young O'Leary that you grieve, my dear?"

Maud pressed his hand, and nodded with a suffocating sob.

"Come, now, do not lay your poor head against that hard carriage frame; rest it on my bosom—there! Now, come; trust in me, and dry your tears, my dear! I would not for the world signalize our meeting by any unnecessary act to give you pain. In some respects I am not much like other men, dear Maud. I do not pronounce an irrevocable sentence of separation between yourself and your young lover."



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Maud started, clasped his hand convulsively, and pressed it to her lips.

"Certainly not, my dear; I do not banish him. First let him *deserve* my Maud, and he shall have her! If his affection for her is a high and holy sentiment, it will make him worthy of her. Come, now, I wonder why you weep! What is it you want? tell me!"

"Oh, sir, I want—I want to go back to Falconer! I only want to see how he is, and say a comforting word to him, and take leave of him kindly, as I ought—I, that have been his comforter ever since we were children! Oh! I know he is so wretched at this moment! Yes! there beats no heart on earth as miserable as his is at this very moment! I know he would give anything for the sight of my face! Oh, sir, let us turn back and say a kind word to him!"

"It may not be, my child. It would do no good, but rather harm. He does not want *words*. All he wants now is my Maud, and he cannot have her yet; he must conquer himself; he must change; he must deserve her before he gets her."

"Oh, sir, if you did but know him as *I* know him; how much he needs soothing kindness, how impetuous he is, how wild, how ungovernable he is, how often unhappy, how much he needs *me*—he has been used to me all his life—he cannot do without me! Oh, I *know* he cannot, poor Falconer! Oh, he will feel like half his being was stricken off with me! I know he will!—he will be ill—I am sure he will be ill! Oh, sir, let us go back and see him!"

"It cannot be, my love! You must trust in your father's judgment, little one! This young man's furious passions must be left to rage themselves quiet, and then his reason will act! He will suffer, doubtless! but then it is only through suffering that such natures as his can be corrected. Cheer up, my dear girl! do not quarrel with the discipline of life!"

"If he had only some one to be kind to him, poor boy! to comfort and cheer him, as *I* used to! If he were not so utterly alone—so desolate—no mother—no sister—no one to care for

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him! Oh, *poor* boy! if he had only some one to be kind to him!"

"*I* will care for him—*I* will be kind to him, if he will let me. Do not fear, my dear child! I shall not lose sight of him. I will endeavor to do far better for him than he or you could hope. Come, now; dry those sweet eyes!—cheer up, and let me see you smile! Think of the *mother* you are about to meet! Oh, she has sent you many loving messages!—she says that she is 'not surprised at all—that she ever *felt* you were her child—though she never *knew* it.'"

"And it does not seem so strange to *me*, either. Was she—was Mrs. Hunter—" Maud suddenly paused and flushed with joy, as she said, "Was *my mother* quite well?"

"Quite well, my dearest girl, and she will join us at Howlet Hall very soon."

"And I am her lost Maud—how strange! I ought to be very much surprised, and yet I am not!"

"I think, my love, that the ties of blood were so strong in our case, that we all felt an incomprehensible, unacknowledged attraction to each other."

"Yes, yes, yes, sir," said Maud, softly, to herself, and then she sank into a silence that her father would not interrupt.

When they reached Howlet Hall, and the carriage drew up before the door, Daniel Hunter alighted, handed his daughter out, and pausing a moment while he held her hand, said,

"This is your home, my darling. Come to my heart and hearth. Welcome!" and he embraced her and led her up the stairs.

"Mrs. Hunter has arrived, sir," said the servant, who attended the door.

"Ah! Indeed! How long since?" asked Mr. Hunter, with surprise and delight.

"Only this moment, sir. She has retired to her chamber."

"How did she come?" inquired Daniel Hunter, hurrying in.

"In a hack, sir—it has just gone around to the stable."

"My darling, where shall I leave you for a moment?" asked

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Mr. Hunter, turning to his daughter. Then opening the door of the drawing-room on the right hand side of the hall, and seeing a fine fire burning in the grate, he led her thither, and drew forward a deep, soft chair, and placed her in it, saying, "Remain here, my dear; I will see your mother," and he left the room.

He hastened up stairs to Mrs. Hunter's apartment, and found the lady seated in a lounging chair, leaning wearily back, and under the hands of her maids, one of whom was removing her bonnet and veil, and the other kneeling at her feet, taking off her fur over-shoes. At the sight of her husband all signs of weariness fled, and the lady started up to meet him, eagerly inquiring,

"Have you seen her? Is she well? Have you brought her?"

"Yes, dear, I have seen her, and brought her hither, and she is well. She awaits you in the drawing-room."

"Betty and Tilda, leave the room; I do not need your assistance," said the lady to her attendants, then turning to her husband, as they left the room, she said, "Oh, bring her hither immediately, Mr. Hunter. I do so *long* to embrace her."

"Compose yourself. It is unusual for *you* to be so excited."

"It is an unusual occasion."

"You followed me very quickly."

"Yes, poor Norah breathed her last the morning after you left, and within an hour after her death I left town."

"And Honoria and Percival?"

"They are at the hotel. Letty is with them!"

"Letty is in her usual health and spirits?"

"Oh, certainly! Oh, *do go* and bring my daughter hither!"

"Be cool, love. I tell you excitement is always enfeebling, if it be not a sign of original feebleness. I am going to bring her now," said Daniel Hunter, turning to go down stairs.

"I wonder what could move *him*," said the lady, just a little impatiently, as she walked up and down the floor.

The door opened, and Daniel Hunter re-entered, leading Maud. The lady stopped in her walk and turned around. There she came—the long lost child—the beautiful maiden—aye, more

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beautiful than even the mother's fancy had ever pictured her—there she came, with her eyes seeking her mother. Their eyes met—they did not rush into each other's arms—their emotions were far too real—too deep—and the maiden's feelings too nearly awful for that. Their eyes were fixed upon each other—their faces instinct with emotion—they approached each other slowly, and met in a silent, close embrace. And then the soft sound of smothered sobbing was heard. And Daniel Hunter went to the window and looked out, wondering why women wept at everything—at what they were glad of as well as what they were sorry for, and—wiped his own eyes. After a little while, Mrs. Hunter led her daughter to a sofa, and they both sat down. And the lady held the maiden's hand, and gazed in her lovely face, until her snowy eyelids fell over the sweet blue eyes, and her soft cheek suffused with a rosy blush, and she grew lovelier than ever. And then the lady raised her hand, and looked at its exquisite beauty, and next took off her little black bonnet, and set free her long bright ringlets—those peerless ringlets of that rich, rare hue, between the golden and the auburn, which old, classic painters loved so well. "She is perfect, she is perfect," was the verdict of the lady's judgment. And then she thought, with a transient swell of pride, of the sensation, of the *wonder*, this matchless beauty would have created in the circles of London, Paris, Vienna—at any of the courts at which she herself had resided in the last seven years. But the next instant the sinful pride was suppressed, and she only felt that this was her own dear child—her good and loving Maud—and with a silent, hidden, restrained rapture, she drew and pressed her to her bosom. And all this time they had not spoken a word to each other.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE RESTORED DAUGHTER.

Thou art my daughter—never loved as now—
Thou mountain maid, thou child of liberty.
Oh, Sylvia! Well from forest shades they named thee—
Free as its breezes—fresher than its dews.—*Bernard Barton.*

In the morning, Mrs. Hunter and her beautiful daughter sat together in the chamber that had been assigned to the maiden. It was such a pleasant apartment, that I may be pardoned for describing it. It was on the second floor of the south wing of the mansion. It was a lofty, spacious room, with four high windows—two east and two west—where all day long the sunshine entered. These windows were heavily curtained with blue damask, lined with white sarcenet, looped back with cords and tassels, showing inner curtains of rich lace. The hangings of the bedstead, and the coverings of two lounging chairs and a sofa, were of the same material and color. The elegant toilet that stood between the east windows, was draped with lace, lined with blue silk. And the style of the carpet on the floor was a light, running vine of violets, over a white ground. The dressing-bureau, wardrobe, washstand, little table, etc., were of white satin-wood, highly polished. A few cheerful looking pictures adorned the walls, and pretty quaint looking vases, &c., stood upon the mantel-piece. A glowing coal fire, in a polished steel grate, completed the comfort of the room. The low, luxurious sofa was drawn up to the fire, and Mrs. Hunter sat in it with her daughter at her side, with her arm around her waist, never tired of caressing her, never weary of contemplating her, ever seeking a deeper and more real consciousness of the joy of possessing her. Combing her fingers through the soft, glittering ringlets, the lady murmured,

"Strange, I never thought you were my lost child, yet ever *felt* it. Passing strange, yet perfectly true. When I first saw

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you, little one! when looking up from my class-book in the Sunday-school, I first met those sweet, wistful, blue eyes fixed on mine, I *felt* something in their look that was familiar, something that was intimate—that was my own—that was of myself. Your eyes had the very same expression that they had often worn when you were an infant on my bosom, when waking up from your infant slumbers you would look out upon life with new wonder, and then up to me with a questioning, loving, trusting look, as if asking what it was. And so when our eyes met that day in the Sunday-school, I *felt* that they were the same eyes that used to look out from a baby's face which years before had laid upon my bosom, the same eyes gazing up into mine with the same earnest, wistful, wondering, questioning, loving gaze. Now tell me, love, can you recall your feelings at that moment? can you tell me why you looked at me with such a searching, eager, fond look?"

"Yes—yes, lady—yes, dear mamma, I know!" said the maiden, gravely, almost solemnly.

"Why was it then?" asked the lady, bending over her to press a kiss upon her forehead.

"Sweet mother! it was because I half recognized you!"

"Half recognized me?"

"Yes, dearest mamma."

"How is that? What does my sweet one mean?"

"'Our life is two-fold—sleep hath its own world,' says Falconer's favorite poet. And in the world of sleep, mamma, you were never absent from me. I suppose I must have continued to dream of you from the day I was taken from you, for as far back as I can remember, I have been used to your image in my dreams. It was such an habitual thing that I never wondered at it, or talked of it. And yet I seemed to know that the angel of my sleep was my mother, too; only I thought it was my mother who was buried in the sea. And when I first saw your portrait in the hall and recognized its likeness to my dream-mother, oh! what a thrill it gave me! And then when I saw you in the Sunday-school, and you looked at me, and took my

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hand, and spoke to me so sweetly—oh! I cannot tell you! but if you could only have read my heart! And first I loved you for your likeness to my dream-mother, and then I loved you for yourself!"

"So it was with me, my own—first I loved you for looking at me with little Maud's eyes, and now I love you for your sweet self. And now all the past seems bridged over, and I seem never to have lost you really. And now, love, I trust you will be happy. Come, now, your father has got through with his newspapers, and I hear him walking up and down the hall—let us go to him."

And again embracing her new found treasure, the lady arose, and, followed by the maiden, led the way down stairs. Daniel Hunter was pacing up and down the long, central hall—a usual relaxation with him after sitting long over his papers. He turned with a smile to meet them, and playfully offered an arm to each for an in-doors promenade, he said. They had not made many turns before there was a ring at the front door bell, and the servant who answered it, returned and brought a letter in his hand, which, he said, was for the young lady. Daniel Hunter took it with the design of passing it immediately to his daughter, but in doing so, his eyes fell upon the strange superscription, "*To Mrs. Falconer O'Leary;*" his brow reddened with a look of surprise, displeasure and annoyance, and returning it to the servant, he said,

"There is no one here who bears the name upon this letter. There is probably a mistake—take it back to the person who brought it," and without even condescending to inquire who that "person who brought it" might be, Daniel Hunter turned upon his heel and continued his walk. The servant bowed and left the hall. And Mr. Hunter had scarcely taken a second turn, before the servant re-entered with the letter, saying,

"If you please sir, the messenger who brought this letter is Young Len, Mr. Falconer O'Leary's man, and he says there is no mistake, and that it was sent to my young mistress."

"Falconer!" said Maud, impulsively dropping her father's arm, and going and taking the letter from the servant.

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"Give me that letter, my dear," said Daniel Hunter, reaching forward his hand to take it from her.

"Oh! sir—my father! it is from Falconer," said Maud, detaining it with a pleading look.

"Have you glanced at the superscription of that letter, my dear?"

"No, sir."

"Read it then, and tell me if you answer to such a name."

Maud turned the letter up and read—"*Mrs. Falconer O'Leary*"—and her fair face flushed almost purple, and then paled, and she looked from the letter to her father and her mother in a kind of amazement.

"There, you perceive, my dear, what sort of a right this misguided young man wishes to establish to you. Now, give me the letter that I may return it. Come, my dear, why do you hesitate?"

But Maud still detained the letter, and looked in doubt and anxiety from her father to her mother. Daniel Hunter had patience with her and gave her time. At last she said,

"Father, I know that you are a just man, and that you will tell me what is right. I am very ignorant, father, and I wish to know whether this really is my true name that is written on this letter—because if it is I must keep it!"

"Your name, my dear? Why assuredly not! What do you mean by such a question? Answer me."

"I meant, father, to ask whether that ceremony which was *almost* over had not made me Falconer's wife?"

"No! not if it had been *quite* over! Assuredly not. You are under age, Miss Hunter. You belong to your father and mother. Only they can give you in marriage."

Maud, for all answer, silently handed her father the letter. Daniel Hunter, after a few moment's reflection, seemed to have conquered his first emotion of haughty indignation. He sent his servant to tell Little Len to wait for an answer. And then leaving the mother and daughter together, he went to his study, taking the letter with him. Here he sat down and wrote to Fal-



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coner O'Leary, intending to enclose Falconer's letter in his own. Daniel Hunter seated himself in his leather chair, drew his writing-table before him, and sat reflecting what he should do in this case. Most fathers, in Mr. Hunter's circumstances, would have felt themselves more than justified—would have felt themselves *constrained* to break off all friendly intercourse with the wild, unpromising, young, radical agitator, and to destroy at once, and for ever, every shadow of a hope of his future union with his daughter and heiress. Most fathers would have punished the boy's insolence by sending back his letter inclosed in a scornful reply, or with a more scornful silence. Most fathers would have hurried their young daughter away, and brought every influence of family affection and filial duty to bear upon her heart, and every allurement of travel, change of scene, society, splendor, and luxury, to charm her fancy, and win her from the memory of her childish love. And as far as the daughter's welfare alone was interested, this might have been very well, and it would have promised not unfairly for eventual success; for it was evident to Daniel Hunter, as to all others who saw it, that the affection of Maud for Falconer was only the tender, guileless, outspoken love of an only sister for an only brother. Yes, this plan would have done very well for Maud, only it would have destroyed Falconer. And most fathers would have followed it, but Daniel Hunter was not like most men. For one reason, he had more *moral power* than other men, and he did not feel obliged to damn a poor boy whom he might redeem, or with egotistical indifference, to turn and abandon him to his own destruction, when he could form, guide and elevate him to fame and fortune. Falconer O'Leary was a wild, impetuous, ungovernable young radical—a political ignis-fatuus, likely to lead men into bogs and quicksands, where he would also quench himself. All this was true. But instead of hurling this fiery young spirit down hill as to a native element, Daniel Hunter would snatch it "as a brand from the burning," would place it on a hill, where it should be a light to the world—"a burning and a shining light." That were a glorious thing to do, and

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Daniel Hunter was the man to do it. There is no great deed ever done, that is not *founded* on a self-conquest, self-sacrifice—some darling selfish interest must be laid upon the altar to purchase the *power* of doing it. And the greater the power needed, the greater the propitiatory sacrifice demanded. And under these conditions, Daniel Hunter had the power to redeem this soul alive. The offering required from him was a great one. Do you think it was a *small* affair, for a man of his exalted rank, a man familiar with the adulations of the world, accustomed to all the splendor and refinements of courts and capital cities, and having one beautiful daughter, his sole heiress, to withhold her from the splendid destiny that might await her in the great world of society, and keep her as the prize held forth to encourage and reward the upward struggles of a young man without family, fortune, friends, or distinction, except such as would be considered a credit for him to lose? But this Mr. Hunter resolved to do. And having thus determined, he felt himself the arbiter of the youth's destiny, the architect of his future fame and fortunes.

He laid the paper out before him, took a pen, and wrote to Falconer. No words of mine could do justice to the spirit of this letter. He began, however, by correcting the boy's mistake, as to the claim he made upon Miss Hunter. The marriage, he said, even supposing it had been completed, must still have been illegal, without her father's consent, Miss Hunter being under age. "Consult," he wrote, "every lawyer you please, from a mere country pettifogger to a chief justice—and they will all, the most shallow and the most profound, assure you that you have no *legal* claim upon Maud. Consult any divine of any Christian denomination, from the Congregationalist to the Catholic, and they will convince you that you have no *moral* or *religious* claim upon her. Then ask your own conscience, and it will endorse what the others have decided. Maud is at present perfectly free. And now having cleared away the rubbish of your false foundation, let us build you a better hope upon a surer ground." And then he proceeded to unfold all his great and good

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wishes and intentions for the boy. He said to him what he had said to Maud—that he pronounced no irrevocable sentence of separation between them—that on the contrary, he held her up to him as an incentive to high achievement—a prize to be won—a crowning glory to a high career; and said that if the boy's love were anything better than a mere selfish and exacting passion—if it were a high and holy principle, he would surely strive for her and win her. "And I do not mean by this to say," wrote Daniel Hunter, "that you are bound to achieve a great social success, a world-wide renown—by no means—but become *worthy* of my child; and whether the world endorses your worth or not, you shall have her. It is not your worldly position that I find fault with. I myself am a man of the people, and I should say to a prince, though he were heir to a throne, and came courting my child, what I say to you—prove yourself *worthy* of my Maud before you ask me to give her to you. And now you will bear with the freedom of my words for two reasons. First, that I am the father of the maiden you love, and *your* father also in years and in knowledge of life. And, secondly, because I am really and disinterestedly seeking your good as that of my own son." Lastly, he wrote, that in returning the letter, he acted in no spirit of resentment, but from mature deliberation, and under the strong conviction that in writing and superscribing such a letter, the boy had been influenced by passion, under a total misconception of his true position towards the maiden. He concluded by saying that he should be pleased to see him at Howlet Hall.

Daniel Hunter placed his own epistle, together with Falconer's, in an envelope, sealed and superscribed it, and rang for a messenger, in whose hands he placed it to be given to Mr. O'Leary's servant.

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In the meantime, Mrs. Hunter had reconducted her daughter back to the cheerful lightsome chamber, where they had commenced the morning. And when they were seated again on the low, luxurious sofa, before the fire, Maud dropped her head upon

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her mother's shoulder, and burst into tears—her heart had been slowly filling for some time, and now it overflowed in a shower of tears.

"Now, I wonder why my darling weeps? Is it because she would leave her mother so soon for that young man?" asked Mrs. Hunter, passing her arm around her neck.

"No, mother; no, sweet mother; I could not leave you for the universe. No, not that—but, oh, I *do* feel for Falconer! And so would you, too, if you knew him—if you knew how he needs me—if you felt how bereaved and desolate he is without me. Mother, you know I have been with him all our life—I have been his helper and comforter ever since we were children. And oh! if you did but know how much he needs help and comfort—if you did but know how unhappy he is."

"And would my Maud marry him?—now tell me true."

"Yes, mother, if I might, for I pity him so much."

"Then I should grieve to see my Maud marry him. *Pity* is not the feeling my daughter should have for her future husband, but an elevating love, a high respect. My Maud does not yet even dream of the love she may one day bear one who shall be worthy of her—who shall be able to sustain and elevate her."

"But, oh, mother! his empty, desolate home! to find no one sitting by the hearth! It is enough to break his heart. I cannot *bear* to think of it."

"But his heart is not so easily broken—it is not so tender as yours—besides, he must not stay in that desolate home. It will be even well if suffering drives him forth. A mountain cottage, on a barren farm in this remote region, is no proper place for a talented young man of this century and country, where there is work and to spare for all. He must go forth into the great struggling world, and win himself a name and a place among men."

And thus the mother and child held sweet counsel together for a couple of hours, at the end of which time Daniel Hunter joined them, and the conversation took another turn.

And soon after the carriage was announced, and they separated, to prepare for a drive to the Summit, whither Mrs. Hunter was



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going to purchase for her daughter a much needed new wardrobe, of the best materials that the limited country store could supply,

They returned to a late dinner.

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That evening after Mr. and Mrs. Hunter had retired to their chamber,

"I feel very anxious about our little girl," said Daniel Hunter. "I have seen her eyes fill with tears several times to-day. I do earnestly hope that this is no 'Romeo and Juliet' affair between these young people."

"Do not be uneasy. That Falconer *loves*, as he does everything else, *madly*, there can be no doubt. But that Maud loves with any other than a sisterly affection, I do not believe. Maud's heart, I assure you, has never been awakened to any stronger, more exclusive love, than that of a sister for her brother. You might have been sure of that, by the perfect openness with which she spoke of her affection for Falconer. Do girls speak so of their lovers?"

"I judged as you do—and yet—her tears!"

"They are a sister's tears for a poor, bereaved brother—no more than just that!"

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The next day about noon, the party from the city, consisting of Sir Henry Percival, Miss Honoria and Letty Hunter arrived. They were put in possession of this piece of secret family history, as soon as possible after their establishment at the Hall. The delight of Letty was affecting—it betrayed itself in a burst of tears, as she pressed the new found darling fondly to her faithful, affectionate bosom. Honoria embraced her adopted sister, and touched her warm, rosy cheek with her chilly lips, and then felt that she had done everything that was required of her. But Sir Henry Percival, the young English baronet, when he was presented to the beautiful girl, started as if out of sleep, for he had been gazing on her in a perfect trance of admiration. This did not especially delight Miss Honoria, who certainly considered Sir Henry as her own peculiar cavalier. In the course of a few

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days, the now somewhat large family were comfortably settled in their winter quarters, and preparations were in progress for Christmas. But in the meantime they heard nothing whatever from Falconer O'Leary, and Maud grew daily more anxious and depressed.

Often in her innocent frankness she expressed her anxiety and asked her father or mother if either had heard anything of Falconer, but her parents had heard nothing satisfactory of the young man.

In the meantime, Falconer had received Daniel Hunter's generous letter, but maddened with love, jealousy, disappointment and rage, the boy saw everything distorted through the false medium of his passions, and imagined that his claim upon Maud was indisputable, and that Daniel Hunter knew it to be so, and had written that temporizing, conciliatory letter, only to gain time, and put him off indefinitely. And therefore Falconer, to use his own expression, resolved, "by fair means or foul," to get the maiden in his power.

He sat up all one night to write to her, and in the morning he took the letter to Howlet Hall, and put it in the hands of James, the parlor waiter, with strict injunctions to carry it to his young mistress. And James gave it into the charge of Susan, Maud's own maid, with directions to take it immediately up to Miss Hunter.

It was as yet early in the morning and the maiden had just arisen from her bed, and was standing before a dressing-glass, combing out her long, bright ringlets, when her maid entered, and laid the letter on the dressing-table before her. Maud took it up; it was directed to "*Mrs. Falconer O'Leary.*" The young girl laid it down again with a troubled countenance, and a tremulous sigh, inquiring,

"Who brought this, Susan?"

"I don't know, Miss Hunter. James gave it to me to bring up to you."

Maud took the letter up once more, turned it over, contemplated the superscription witsfully, and with another sigh put it in the hand of her maid, saying,

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"Susan, take this letter back to the messenger who brought it, and say—mind, now, attend and repeat my words exactly, Susan—say that it has been *misdirected*, observe! *misdirected.*"

"Yes, Miss," said the maid, receiving the letter, and leaving the room to obey. And when she was gone, Maud leaned her elbows on the dressing-table and dropped her face upon her hands, and soon the tears were stealing between her fingers.

She wiped them hastily away and lifted up her head as she heard her attendant return to the room. Susan entered, smiling, with the letter in her hand, and said,

"It was Mr. Falconer O'Leary who brought it, Miss Hunter, and he says it was not misdirected—it was for you."

"And where is Mr. O'Leary?" inquired Maud, in a faint voice, as tremblingly she took the letter.

"He went away directly, Miss Hunter."

Maud finished her toilet and dismissed her attendant, and then took up the letter, pressed it to her quivering lips, and placed it in her bosom next her heart, while she knelt and offered up her morning prayers. And then she arose from her knees, threw a light shawl over her shoulders, and prepared to go down stairs; but when quite ready she hesitated, drew the letter from her bosom, and looked at it again, and turned it over and over, trifled with the seal, dwelt upon the handwriting, and notwithstanding the presumptuous superscription, pressed it fervently to her lips and to her bosom, and sat down upon the sofa and wept over it. She would have given much for the privilege of reading Falconer's letter, and answering it kindly and soothingly. But she knew her duty better. And after her fit of crying was over, she arose again, and folded the shawl across her breast, and went down into the sitting-room, where the family were all assembled for morning worship. As soon as that service was over, they all went into breakfast.

And after breakfast, all dispersed, each to make arrangements for spending the forenoon, either in work, amusement or study.

Maud went up to her father's study with the purpose of speaking to him about the letter she had received. She found both

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her parents there in consultation upon some building plan. But as they saw her enter, they broke off their conversation, and turned with smiles to welcome their beautiful child.

She advanced to the table, and laid the letter before her father. Daniel Hunter took it up, and looked at it with surprise and vexation.

"Another letter from that mad boy, my child? and with the same insolent superscription? Really!—But I must be tolerant. Who brought it, my dear? When did you get it? And why did you not return it by the messenger?"

"Falconer in person brought it, my dear father, and when I sent it back to him, he returned it, and departed abruptly, before I could send it a second time, and so I have brought it to you, sir."

"Mad fellow! I invited him to the house on the footing of a friend of the family. Why does he not come?"

"I don't know, sir, indeed. Perhaps the letter would explain."

"Ah! and the seal is still unbroken. I see! Maud, you are a good girl—*a good girl*," he said, putting his arm around her waist, and drawing her close to his side, and holding her so, while he asked, "Now, what do you think of this letter, my child? You know, of course, it is a very presumptuous act in him, to address you by his name."

"He is beside himself, father."

"And therefore I must endure, if I cannot cure his madness. Well! this letter, my love. I should like to know your secret heart—your sweet will about this."

"Oh, my dear father, I should like to have it to read, and perhaps to answer."

Daniel Hunter gave the letter back into her hands, and embracing her fondly, said,

"Take it, then, my child. Go to your chamber. Read, and answer it, if you please to do so. I find that I can trust my Maud in all things. She is her mother's daughter, truly," and he pressed a kiss upon her cheek, and arose and led her from the study.

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And gladly Maud hastened up into her own apartment, closed the door, and broke the seal of her letter. And such a letter as it was! A wild, eloquent, impassioned appeal, bringing all the power, will and obligation of the "potential mood" to bear upon the subject,—commanding, exhorting, entreating Maud to return to him; by her duty, by their mutual love, by her vows pledged at the altar and registered in Heaven. Maud wept over it before she could compose herself to reply to it.

Her answer was most loving, tender and dutiful. She spared no words to assure him of her affection and fidelity; but she said that she belonged to her father, who had the exclusive disposal of her, and that she could not and would not trifle with her filial duty; that the name he addressed her by was not her name; that to *persevere* in addressing her by it, must needs be offensive to her father, and therefore very painful to herself; that if he were patient, she would some day or other be pleased to wear his name, and with her father's sanction, too. And in conclusion, she wrote,

"And now, dearest Falconer, playmate, brother, lover to me for so many years—and always and for ever dearest to my heart —much as I love you—and only Heaven knows how much, and only time can prove how faithfully—I cannot carry on a secret correspondence with you; it is but just to tell you, that every letter you write, however secretly it may reach me, must first go into my father's hands before I read it. It *must* be so, dearest Falconer! I should have no hope for our love, because I could not pray the Lord's blessing on us, if I failed in my duty to my dear, noble, trusting father. He *trusts* me, Falconer, and therefore, you *know*, it is *impossible* for me to deceive him. The letter that you sent me this morning, I laid before him with its seal unbroken And with the seal still unbroken, he gave it back to my hand, and left me free to read and reply to it as I pleased. And though he exacted no promise, dropped no kind of a wish to see my answer, this answer must be laid before him for perusal before it is sent to you. He did not read your letter that I placed in his hands; he may not read this, my reply;

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but he must have the opportunity of doing so. My father trusts me! and I would not deceive him to win my heart's dearest wish."

Maud finished her letter as she had commenced it, with the most earnest assurances of affection and fidelity. And then she sat a little while in reverie, before folding and sealing it. And while she sat so, she heard a gentle rap at the door, and thinking it was Susan come to put more coal on the fire, she said, "Come in." But when the door opened, it was Mrs. Hunter who entered.

"Now, my dear mother, was it *you?* Did *you* rap before coming into your child's room?" said Maud, with a tender regret in her tone, as she arose and met and embraced the lady.

"You are a sensitive little creature, Maud—a degree more, and you would be a morbid one!"

"Ah, but, sweet mother, don't rap at my door like a stranger again. Come in at any hour of the day or night without rapping," said Maud, with a pleading earnestness that made the lady smile, as she drew the girl to the sofa, and they sat down together; but she answered,

"I think, my dear Maud, it is best to carry the courtesies of life into the most intimate and endearing relations; it will not make them less loving and tender, but more so. My child must have her privacy and her freedom in her father's house. And, besides, she came to her chamber to read and answer a letter."

"Yes, mamma, and I have been a long time about it, have I not? But it was such a long letter, and required such a long answer."

"And have you finished it?"

"Yes, mamma."

"I supposed you had, when I came. And now, my love, if you are disposed, you may get ready to ride with Honoria. Your ponies will be at the door in half an hour."

"And will you read my answer to Falconer, while I am getting ready, mamma?"

"Shall I, my dear?"

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"*Oh, mamma!*" said Maud, embracing her, and putting her letter in her hand.

And while the lady read it, Maud changed her slippers for a pair of gaiters, put on her riding habit, arranged her hair, and tied on the little hat, and drew on her gloves, and then stood waiting a few minutes.

Mrs. Hunter finished the letter, and held it on her lap, and sat looking at it with the tears welling up in her dark eyes.

Maud came up behind her, and with her hand on her shoulder, and her lips on her cheek, whispered,

"Will it do, mother?"

"Yes, my love."

"You see I was between Scylla and Charybdis, with that letter, mother. I did not wish to wrong my dear father's confidence, or to wound and distress my dear Falconer."

"Your good, true instincts have guided you safely between the two, my love."

"It is all right, then, mamma?"

All right, my darling."

"And there is nothing to alter?"

"Nothing—nothing, my love."

"Why are the tears in your eyes, sweet mother?"

"For joy, and for sorrow, Maud—for joy in my child's goodness and truth—for sorrow at her grief. But never mind," said the lady, smiling, a little trial will not hurt my girl at her age—it will do her good."

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### IN HOWLET HOLLOW.

—And present still, tho' now unseen,
When brightly shines the prosperous day,
Be thoughts of thee a cloudy screen,
To temper the deceitful ray.
And oh! when gathers o'er our path,
In shades and storm the frequent night,
Be thou long suffering—slow to wrath.
A burning and a shining light.—*Scott.*

MAUD joined the riding party, who made a circuit of the Barrier, and returned only in time to dress for dinner. The afternoon and evening were, as usual, spent in the fireside recreations of music, reading and conversation, so that the maiden found no proper opportunity of laying her reply to Falconer's letter before her father until the next morning, when, as was his custom immediately after breakfast, he went to his study to transact business. Maud soon after followed him thither, and there, as on the previous morning, she found both her parents sitting together at the writing-table, with a diagram before them, and deep in consultation over a plan for a parsonage to be built at the Summit for Mr. Lovel. And when indeed were Daniel Hunter and Augusta ever found deeply interested and engaged, but in plans for the well-being of others? So softly had Maud entered, that they were insensible of her presence, until she approached the table—then both looked around and smilingly held out their hands to draw her in between them. Then Maud put her letter in her father's hands, but before she could withdraw her own hand, Daniel Hunter closed her fingers over her letter, and put it from him, smilingly saying,

"I have perfect confidence in my child—I do not need to read her correspondence."

Maud blushed with pleasure, and the tears sprang to her eyes, and at that moment she felt that she would not wrong his



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confidence for a kingdom—for her lover—for anything under Heaven.

"But you will seal and send it for me, father?" she asked, smilingly.

"Yes, my love, if you wish—lay it on the table."

Maud laid her letter down, and turned to retire, but with a lingering look, that her father saw and understood, and answered, by saying,

"You needn't go, my dear, unless you wish. Here, take my place, and see if you can assist your mother by suggesting any improvement in that portico of the parsonage."

And he arose from his seat, and gently placed his daughter in it. And then he went and drew a chair up to the opposite side of the table, and sat down, and took a sheet of paper to enclose Maud's letter, with a few lines from himself to Falconer. He wrote—

"I transmit to you my dear girl's letter, and approve and endorse all she has written and promised. Will you not strive to merit and win this good girl? You are too chivalric, I am sure, coolly to wish to snatch a prize you have not earned. Consider me your not easily alienated friend."

And then he folded and sealed and directed the little packet, and rang for a messenger, to whom he gave it, with orders to take it at once to Silver Creek.

And this letter was carried to Falconer. But the hot-headed, self-willed, passionate boy, so recently and so unexpectedly bereaved of his idol and his darling;—with his home desolate, his heart still bleeding from its ruptured ties, his blood on fire with love and grief and fear and rage:—like a young tiger suddenly spoiled of his mate, was in no mood truly to appreciate the noble confidence and generosity of the father, or the beautiful, filial piety of the daughter. His love, besides, was too fierce and jealous in its exclusiveness, to endure the thought of *any* interference between them, especially that of her father, of Daniel Hunter, whom, from the bottom of his heart, he hated and detested, as the stern, unsparing despot who was the cause of his

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family's fall. And to this insane and obstinate piece of gross injustice, was added the fatal self-deception with which he persuaded himself of the validity of his claim to Maud, and consequently of the supposed double dealing and fraudulent policy of her father. He deigned no answer whatever to Mr. Hunter's letter, which he stigmatized as an insolent attempt to patronize him. But to Maud he wrote a fierce, scathing reply. For so did rage and jealousy war in his heart with love, that he would almost as willingly have strangled as embraced the maiden, had she been in his power. He sent that precious testimonial of his affection for her, and then after a little while, when it was gone beyond recall—when he felt certain that it was in her hands, and that she was weeping over it—his mood changed, and he could have thrust his hand into the fire and burnt it off, for having written it. And he felt as if he would have given his life to have recalled it. He strode up and down the floor, and called himself an idiot! a madman! a devil! a beast! a combination of all four! And he wished that somebody would have the kindness to blow his desperate brains out! And then he sat down and wrote sheet after sheet with passionate penitence, and then, digusted with his work, tore them to pieces, and threw them into the fire, and rushed from the house, and fled up the mountain-side, to hurl himself and lose his agony amid the awful solitudes of nature. It was late in the night when he returned, calm because wearied, and he sat up till morning to write to Maud. And this letter satisfied him, and he sent it.

The young girl had just returned from her morning ride, when Little Len overtook her, rode up and placed it in her hand, and having her father's sanction now, she immediately retired to her room to read it. It was even more impassioned, despairing, desperate than the first. He spoke eloquently of the awful, the stunning suddenness of the bereavement that had left his heart and home and life desolate;—he said that his house was intolerable, because he missed her from her old place at the fireside:—

"Your little sewing chair and work-basket almost break my heart! And your chamber—it was a suicidal thing to do, and I

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found it so—but I went into your chamber, and saw all your little things—your toilet-table and glass, your bed, your chest of drawers—and on the floor your slippers that you used to wear about the house—everything to remind me of the loving, little wife, so cruelly rifled from my bosom just as she was made my own! Was ever any act so ruthless—any suffering so maddening in the world? I tell you, Sylvia, I threw myself down upon your chamber-floor, over those two little shoes, and I wept like a child, howled like a wild beast, and raved like a demon! Life is worthless, and worse than worthless, without you!—it is intolerable!—it is a long, protracted torture, whose every pulse is a pang!—I cannot, and will not endure it. I will cast it off as quickly as I would an oppressive burden! I can die for you, but I cannot live without you."

Farther down he wrote—"You are my wife in the sight of Heaven and earth. I do not want any priest or any judge to tell me so—*I know it.* And your father knows it, else he never would take the temporizing course he does. You are my wife; and I love none on earth—not a being on earth but you; all the rest of the world might go, if I had only you—*you.* I could live anywhere with you; in the woods, in a cave, in an open boat on the sea; I could die with you; but I cannot be separated from you. I cannot, Sylvia; madness or death must ensue." Again, near the conclusion, he wrote—"Come to me, my own, my beloved, my familiar darling—come and bring light and joy once more to my darkened, desolated home."

There were many pages filled with just such desperate lamentations and ravings as these. And the maiden read, and wept as if her heart would break. Keenly—keenly she felt his sorrows! and never, never had her affection for the boy, whose very necessities endeared him the more to her heart—been so deep and solicitous. She answered his letter immediately; renewing all her former assurances of unchanging affection and fidelity; expressing her painful sympathy with his griefs; telling him that his want of faith in her father and in herself, was the chief element in his unhappiness; finally, begging him to confide in her

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father, accept his invitation, and come to see her at the Hall. She dispatched this letter.

And that very same afternoon back came an answer—just as mad as any of its predecessors—in the course of which he told her, that to invite him to visit her there at the Hall, where he should see her only in a circle of fine ladies and gentlemen, whose presence would prevent him, though his bosom were bursting, from relieving it by speaking one true heart-word to her—was a mockery, and worse than a mockery. He did not want that—*that* were the fate of Tantalus. No! he wanted her in his home. And this, he said, was his last appeal. Would she come, he asked; would she come and restore him to himself? This was his last appeal, he repeated. If she would listen to it; from the most wretched, she would render him the happiest being on earth! If she would not, then his home and neighborhood, grown hateful and intolerable, would be abandoned; he should sell all he possessed, and go off; he knew not, cared not, where! to meet he knew not, cared not, what fate! There, she had his life, his reason, his destiny here and hereafter, in her hands. Would she sacrifice him?

The bitterest tears that maiden had ever shed, were dropped upon his letter; but she was not for a moment tempted to swerve from duty. She answered it sadly but firmly; reassuring him of her undying affection, but reiterating her resolution never to wrong her father's confidence; and saying: "If I could do as you urge me, Falconer; if I could so forget what I owe my parents; if I could so deceive and betray their trust, I should be for ever unworthy of *your* confidence, and you should never trust me more." And she ended her letter with the most earnest assurances of her sympathy and affection for him, her faith in duty, and her hope in the future This letter was also dispatched.

But days passed, and she received no answer to it, nor heard any news of the youth. At length, one morning, she received a passionate, sorrowful, and bitterly accusative letter from Falconer; telling her that he had disposed of all his possessions in



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Alleghany county, and had left the neighborhood, and bidding her farewell for ever! This letter had been placed in her hands by her maid, as soon as she was out of bed in the morning. She read it in a sort of mournful amazement, and then asked Susan when it had been brought. Her maid replied that Little Len had brought it the night previous, after the family had retired, and that Len said his young master had that morning taken the stage for Baltimore. In a sad bewilderment the maiden threw on her dressing-gown, and taking the letter with her, went to her parents' apartment. Arrived at the door, she rapped, and asked,

"May I come in, dear mother?"

"Yes, enter, my darling," answered the sweet voice of Mrs. Hunter.

And Maud opened the door, and passed into the chamber. Her father, in his dressing gown and slippers, sat in an easy-chair before the fire, taking *life* "easy." Her mother, in her graceful morning wrapper, had arisen to meet her, with a smile of affectionate welcome; but something in Maud's tone of voice, and something in her look, alarmed the lady, and she hastened forward and took her hand, exclaiming,

"My dear child."

Maud silently pressed her hand and carried it to her lips, and held up Falconer's note to view, and then went on and handed it to her father. Daniel Hunter first drew her to his bosom, and embraced her fondly, and then set her down upon his knees, and put his arm around her waist, while he read the note. Mrs. Hunter stood behind him, and with her hand upon his shoulder, leaned over and followed him in the perusal. When it was over, he folded and returned it to Maud, saying, kindly,

"Do not let this matter trouble you too much, my child. I have the will and the power to bring good out of this. Trust in me, my child."

And pressing a kiss upon her brow, he passed her into the charge of her mother.

"I will go with you to your room, my love," said the lady, taking her hand and leading her from the chamber.

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When they reached the maiden's room, Mrs. Hunter drew her daughter within her arms, and with a troubled and foreboding heart gazed upon her face. Two crimson spots blazed upon Maud's cheeks, her dark-blue eyes were preternaturally dilated, and the purpled veins upon the snowy forehead and temples were full, distended and throbbing.

"You are not well, my darling."

"Yes, sweet mother."

"But you are not; your face is flushed—your head is so hot," she said, passing her hand over the burning forehead; "your head is so hot."

"It is only the headache, dear mother; I am apt to have the headache when anything—any trouble—shock—What was I saying? Oh! save me!" exclaimed the maiden, as she reeled and fell.

Mrs. Hunter raised and laid her on the bed, and rang violently for assistance.

Miss Hunter's maid came hurrying in, and was hastily dispatched for Mr. Hunter, who speedily entered the chamber, to find his wife standing, wringing her hands, over the insensible form of their daughter.

A physician was immediately sent for. And as soon as the intervening distance permitted, old Doctor Henry arrived, and was conducted to the bedside of the sufferer. He pronounced her illness a mild type of brain fever, superinduced by mental excitement. Yes! the sorrow and anxiety of the last few weeks —patiently as they had been borne, kindly as they had been soothed—had overcome the sensitive, finely tempered organization, and excitement reached its climax in fever.

Her illness was not long or severe, and at no period of it was her life in danger. In two weeks she was able to sit up in her easy-chair, or recline upon the low sofa, before her chamber fire. And Mrs. Hunter, who had been her sole nurse during her illness, was her constant companion in her convalescence. And these were pleasant days, and reminded the mother and daughter of a previous convalescence of the latter, which she reverted to as being the sweetest reminiscence of the past.

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And while the young girl was thus gaining strength daily, Daniel Hunter made a journey to Baltimore, that took him from home for a week. And by the time he returned, his daughter was going about the house as usual.

The morning after his arrival, he sent for Maud to come to him in his study. She went, and found him sitting in his leather-chair, with Mrs. Hunter near him, as usual.

Indeed it was a rare thing to see them apart; for the years that passed over their heads but drew them the closer together —they were truly one—one in thought, affection, and purpose. In early life, Mrs. Hunter had, as a matter of conscience, avoided taking any part in the statesman's political toils, cares and anxieties, lest he should not afterwards be able to enjoy that thorough rest and recreation in her society, which he otherwise might have done. But as time passed, Augusta had felt herself drawn irresistibly more and more into closer and closer companionship in *all* the man's, the philanthropist's, the statesman's interests, thoughts, plans and purposes. And this closer union made both happier. Her mornings, whenever he needed her, or thought he needed her, were passed with Daniel Hunter in his study; and in the evenings, their labor and cares were forgotten in the family circle around the fire. But this by the way.

Upon the present occasion, no heavy state affair, no reformatory project, not even a neighborhood improvement—but a more genial family interest engaged Mr. and Mrs. Hunter. As Maud entered, her father, with a cheerful, encouraging countenance, held out his arms to her; and when she came to him, he drew her between his knees and set her down, and smiled in her face.

Maud thought she had never seen her father look so strong and calm and benignant—so full of power and goodness and self-reliance—and a certain high faith and hope mingled with her love, and raised it almost to worship, as she lifted her eyes to his face. He said,

"I sent for you, my dear, to tell you to relieve yourself from all uneasiness, to cast all your care on me—for I care for you. I have the desire and the ability to make you happy. Of what

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avail, indeed, were my age and position, if I had not the power to bless our one child? All that I am, and have, my love, will I use in making your mother's child content. You do not know what took me to Baltimore? No, for I would drop no hint of a purpose that must have been a subject of excitement and anxiety to you during my absence, and would have hindered your recovery. But I went to Baltimore in pursuit of Falconer. I understand that boy thoroughly, my dear; his very faults grow out of a noble, though misguided nature, which time, experience and knowledge will correct. I feel a real and deep interest in him, my dear, and not solely upon your account, but also upon his own and his family's. I have great hopes for him, my love—he will yet do very well; he will yet be an honor to his friends and to his country."

"Did you see him in Baltimore, my dear father?"

"No, my dear, I did better than that. It would not have been well to have seen him in the mood he was then in. But I was enabled to make a tolerably accurate guess as to the places where I should be most likely to hear news of him. As there was no election pending, I made inquiries about him at artists' studios. I found that he had visited several in Baltimore, and that he was going the next day to Washington City. Now, therefore, in order to effect my purpose in his behalf, it was necessary for me to precede him thither. I did so. I set out by the night coach, and reached the city by the next morning. Immediately after breakfast, I went to see our friend Donzoni, the Italian sculptor, in the employment of the government."

"A man, my love, who owes his present fortune to your father's patronage. Fifteen years ago, when we first went to Europe, Mr. Hunter found, in a small village in Italy, a poor, unfriended, but highly-gifted young artist, who, in addition to the trials of genius, had endured persecutions, and well-nigh suffered martyrdom for the freedom of his thoughts and utterance upon religious and political questions. Your father brought him to this country, procured him a government contract, and laid the foundation of his present fortunes. Donzoni, my child, is

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one of the many men of genius in all the departments of life, who owe their success to your father's discriminating benevolence and timely aid," said Mrs. Hunter, warmly.

Maud lifted an almost worshipping glance to her father's noble countenance, but he only smiled and kissed her, and shook his head, saying,

"I do not know, my dear; every one whom I have been so happy to assist, would probably have succeeded without my aid, though possibly not so soon and easily as with it. Genius, like murder, will out, and it is easier to clear the way for it, than to repress and keep it back. But as I was about to say, my dear, I found Donzoni in his studio, near the Capitol. I had a long and confidential conversation with him. I spoke of Falconer—spoke highly, and I am sure justly, of his genius and promise. I found that he knew and appreciated the boy. And then I held out such strong inducements to him, as decided him to offer Falconer a place in his studio as pupil and assistant. I received his promise to this effect, and took leave with the understanding that he should come in the evening and sup with me at my lodgings at Brown's. It turned out exactly as I had expected. When Donzoni came in the evening, he informed me that Falconer had called at his studio about the middle of the afternoon, soon after the arrival of the day-coach from Baltimore, in fact, and that he had made the stipulated proposal to the young man, and it had been immediately accepted. Therefore, you see, my dear, for the present, Falconer is safe and provided for."

"My dear father! my dear, dearest father!" said Maud, kissing his hands, with the tears in her eyes.

"And Falconer, as yet, knows not to whom he is indebted for his present good fortune," said Mrs. Hunter.

"As yet, *nothing;* nor is it necessary that he should. In the boy's present mood, the knowledge would be worse than useless—it would be detrimental. All he wants from me now is my Maud; and he wants her instantly, and as I cannot give her to him yet, he would spurn all other benefits. He is young, fiery, headstrong, self-willed He has always not only really been his

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own master, but has considered himself everybody else's. He never was opposed, probably, in his life before—and now to be frustrated in the very dearest wish of his heart, just in the hour of its fruition, and by a man whom he considers it a religious duty to hate, too, half-maddens the poor boy, and no wonder. We must allow him time to recover himself," said Daniel Hunter, smiling.

"My dear father! my dear, honored father!" murmured his child, under her breath, as she pressed his hands to her bosom and to her lips.

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In the meantime, if any one is interested in knowing it, Miss Honoria had Sir Henry Percival all to herself in the drawing-room. And the young Englishman had got himself into a beautiful entanglement. Meeting with his relatives, Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, in London, and joining their party for the sake of coming over to the United States and seeing the American people at home, he had been attracted by the superficial beauty of Honoria's face, and during the long sea voyage, had paid her such "particular" attentions, as had somewhat committed him with the beauty in love with the *baronetcy*. But at the very first sight of Maud Hunter, for the very first time in his life, he really and irrevocably lost his heart. And you may imagine how delightful it was, under such circumstances, to be tacitly given over by all parties to Miss Honoria. And he remained at Howlet Hall, apparently as the suitor of Honoria,—really as the lover of Maud—a position which neither Maud nor her parents had perceived.

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### THE WORLD OUTSIDE.

He knows that pleasure's hand will throw
Its silken nets about her;
He feels how lonesome he will be
The long, long days without her;
But in letters *might* be joy,
The reading, the replying,
To bless each word that's traced by her
Upon her truth relying—*Bayley.*

Soon after the first of January, Mr. Hunter wrote to his agent in Washington, to engage for his use a furnished house in the "court end" of the city—and early in February he removed thither with his family.

As soon as it was known that Daniel Hunter was established in his town house for the season, his doors were besieged by visitors, who had not enjoyed the opportunity of paying their respects to the great statesman and diplomatist since his return from his long residence in Europe. It became an absolute necessity to appoint weekly evenings upon which to receive his friends, in order to secure a portion of his time to himself and his family. And, therefore, Mr. and Mrs. Hunter agreed upon Wednesday evening of each week upon which to see the world at home, and had their cards engraved to that effect. While they were together consulting over their visiting list, Daniel Hunter said,

"I have been turning it over in my mind whether it was best or not to leave a card upon young O'Leary. It is difficult to decide how far to go, and where to stop in dealing with a young gentleman of his character and disposition. It would not be well to spoil him—to feed his egotism, and increase his presumption, of which he has a plenty, poor boy. What shall I do, Augusta?"

"Leave your card with him, Mr. Hunter. Wherever there is a doubt let good feeling decide. And surely, dearest, if any one in the world can afford to act out the utmost desire of his

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benevolence without the possibility of misinterpretation, it is yourself. Of what worth else are your position and years?"

"I will do so, Augusta," he said, and gathering up his papers, he took his hat and left the apartment.

Mrs. Hunter went to her dressing-room, where a couple of mantua-makers were engaged in fitting the young ladies with ball and street dresses. As she entered, she heard the voice of Miss Honoria in fretful complaint.

"I really never *imagined* such countrified notions; but country girls are so queer."

"What is it, my dear?" inquired the lady.

"Why, mamma, I said I really did *wish* papa would use Montplaisir's hair-dye, for, indeed, he really is as gray as a rat! But, Maud here objects; she says—"

"Yes! What said my Maud?" asked the lady, turning to her daughter as Honoria paused.

"I said, mamma, that I *loved* his gray locks, and I *do*. They are *his*, and I should not know him without them."

"Nor I, my dear," said Mrs. Hunter.

"Oh! but that is *so* ridiculous now, Maud! Why, papa is only fifty, and he is as gray as an owl, and, really, he *ought* to dye his hair. I really do wish he would!"

"And I really do assure you, Miss Honoria, if you speak of such a thing in connection with your father again, you will incur my displeasure," said the lady, gravely.

"But, mamma, *why?* Now *you*, to be sure, do not need anything like that. *You* look twenty years younger than papa. *You* have no gray hairs. Your head is as raven black as ever."

"No," said Augusta, with emotion, "because he has sheltered it so well. His hair is bleached by the storms of life that have beaten on his head; and mine is unfaded, because he has leaned over me, and sheltered me with himself; because, notwithstanding all the trials and sorrows and casualties of life, he has made me so *content*. Yes! so *happy*. God bless his premature gray hair! it is a crown of glory descended upon his head." The lady's heart was deeply moved by a life's memories rushing



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upon her; yet, thinking that she had at first spoken somewhat coolly to poor Ellen's frivolous child, she drew the young girl to her, and kissed her cheek, saying, gently, "I am not displeased with you, my dear; you did but mistake. When you live longer, and know and feel more, you may see a deeper beauty and deeper meaning in gray hair than ever you saw in black or auburn tresses."

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Engagements of every description crowded upon the Hunters, and it was just impossible to evade or escape them. Every morning there were calls to make or receive, or shopping or sight-seeing to do, or some great debate in Congress to hear. Every day there was a dinner party at home or abroad. Every evening a ball or a "reception" somewhere, or a party made up for the opera, the theatre, or a concert. And so every hour of the day, and every day of the week, except the Sabbath, was filled up. And Daniel Hunter laughed and said,

"Well, well! let's yield the point! Let the world have us while we are here. By-and-by we shall be at home."

And the beautiful Maud Hunter received an honor, to which, in her modesty and humility, the maiden had certainly never aspired—she became the reigning belle, the toast, the divinity, the rage, the enthusiasm of the fashionable world at Washington. Mrs. Hunter always presided at her daughter's toilet, and perhaps it was quite as much to her mother's exquisite taste as to her own exceeding grace and loveliness, that the maiden owed her position as queen of *fashion*, as well as of beauty. Whatever style of dress Miss Hunter originated, at once became the prevailing mode, and was immediately adopted by ladies of all height and complexion—by the majestic and the petite—the brunette and the blonde—the fleshy and the fragile—the pale and the blooming—whether it became them or not. Of her it was true that,

> Beauty watched to imitate
> And gather from her air and gait
> The graces of its queen.

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Doubtless there had been other belles in Washington city. Season after season they had successively and successfully electrified the fashionable circles there. Each winter had witnessed the rise, culmination and decline of a new star in fashion's hemisphere. But *they*—one and all, had been spoiled by adulation even in their school days—were full of the pride and vanity "of conscious beauty born;" were unnatural, artificial, affected—the Juno-like, with lofty and imperial airs—the sylph-like, with poetic and sentimental graces. Maud was different from all those—the child of beauty, genius and goodness, she was the unspoiled child of nature as truly.

The *charm*—the winning and endearing *charm* of Maud Hunter's beauty, was her innocent unconsciousness of its possession, and of its effect. She really did not know that she was the most beautiful and most admired girl in the city. And all the adulation she received, she simply accepted as offered solely to *Daniel Hunter's* daughter. Her *mother* had ever been her ideal of perfect beauty, and if ever the maiden had a vain personal desire, it was that her own hair and eyes had been *dark*, like her mother's, and her father's, and Falconer's. It was this sweet humility and modesty that so endeared her to all hearts—that subdued the feeling of envy, and silenced the tongue of detraction in her rivals; that deepened admiration into love. Yes! a disinterested *love* was the sentiment she awakened in all, even the coldest, the most worldly hearts. Old men and maidens, young men and matrons, all who looked upon the beautiful girl, felt their hearts drawn to her—looked upon her, and loved her.

And in the meantime, how did poor Falconer bear this? Eating his own heart in sullen rage. His almost fear was realized—his "Star of Silver Creek" had risen upon the city—and for one poor lover, had a town full of adorers. Rumor also gave her in marriage. It was said that the beautiful Miss Hunter and the young English baronet, seen always in her company, were affianced. And that *that* was the reason why the young lady received the adulations of all others with such gentle indifference. All these rumors reached the poor fellow in his studio, and he

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ground his teeth in silent torture—the harpies of jealousy, rage, and despair were gnawing at his heart.

"I knew it," he growled to himself; "I knew it! I said so! I told her of it! Oh! prophetic soul of mine! I foretold that she had only to be seen to be worshipped, and only to be worshipped to be won!"

And to relieve himself and express his sentiments, he flew to his art, and made a model of the Laocoon strangled by serpents, and showing a countenance so diabolical with anguish, despair and malignity, as could only be inspired by such a state of mind as that of the artist.

He seldom went out, for he was totally unconnected in the city, and he scornfully rejected the good offices of the only man who both could and would have introduced him into society. He would not honor Mr. Hunter's card with any sort of notice; when he first got it, he took it up, and turned it about with a bitter and sour smile, and read, "DANIEL HUNTER receives, Wednesday evenings at 8 o'clock," and said,

"'Daniel Hunter!' Just see the arrogance of that man! just see 'the pride that apes humility!' Another man would have written *Mr.* Daniel Hunter, but he writes Daniel Hunter as if it were JULIUS CÆSAR! And it deceives the people, too! Pah! how I hate humbug!" and so saying he tossed the card over his shoulder, and hammered away at his work, digging vicious furrows in the unlucky brow of the Laocoon.

And all this while Daniel Hunter was silently and secretly watching over the boy, and promoting his interests. He lost no opportunity of recommending the young sculptor to his friends. And all commissions for busts, medallions, statuettes, &c., which Falconer received during the winter, and which, with an artist's pleasant egotism he ascribed solely to his own merits, were entirely owed to Daniel Hunter's exertion and influence in his behalf.

Falconer never saw Maud except at church, or in the ladies' gallery of the Senate, or in the carriage on the Avenue, or at some concert or opera, and then she was always with her parents and

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the odious Sir Henry Percival. And the boy was too proud and resentful to approach her under such circumstances.

So passed the season until it drew near its close. Congress adjourned on the 4th of March, and the fashionable world was preparing to leave Washington. Falconer did not know, and scorned to inquire whether Daniel Hunter and his family would leave with the others. But he had not spoken with Maud since her arrival in the city, nor in fact since their separation at the altar. And now an intense, irresistible *longing* to speak to her, to hear her speak, took possession of his soul.

The President's last reception was to be held on the evening of the 3d of March, and all the world was expected to be there. The Hunters would be present of course. And Falconer O'Leary resolved to go and enjoy perhaps the last opportunity he should have of seeing and speaking to Maud.

So when the evening came, he made a careful toilet, and set out for the presidential mansion. The numerous carriages of all descriptions, with their horses' heads turned thitherward, the crowd of carriages lining the avenue, and thronging the drive through the lawn, and ranged before the mansion, admonished this poor, solitary foot-passenger, how great the press of wealthy, fashionable, or distinguished visitors would be. He entered the grounds by the side gate, and there he found plenty of company in the humbler visitors that thronged the paved foot-way, and were hurrying on to the most democratic assembly in the world. He went on, and the nearer he approached the mansion, the thicker, the more impassable became the crowd. He arrived at its portals, and found the steps, halls and passages literally blocked up with the multitude, who had come to pay their last respects to the most popular President the country had seen since the days of Washington.

Slowly, and with great difficulty, he "worked his passage" through halls and anti-chambers into the drawing-room, where the President received his friends. This room was quite as much crowded as any he had toiled through. He glanced at the centre of the room, where the chief magistrate stood, attended by the



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marshal and other civic and military officers, and shook hands with all comers among those hundreds, until Falconer had compassion on the muscles of the old man's right hand arm, and wondered if it were possible he could go entirely through with the multitude. The boy did not linger here; he did not care an iota for the President, who was not of his way of thinking in politics; besides, he thought the best feeling was to be shown in *not* helping to tire that aged hand to death; so, without waiting to shake hands with his excellency, he worked his way through the crowd and entered the "east room"—the grand saloon of the presidential mansion.

The saloon was superbly fitted up and splendidly illuminated, and filled with the most brilliant and imposing company that had ever gathered there. Here were assembled some of the most distinguished men and most beautiful women from the four quarters of the nation; men high in military or civic rank, renowned in the field or the forum; scholars celebrated in the arts or sciences; general officers in their gorgeous uniforms; foreign ministers and ambassadors in their sumptuous court dresses, and attended by their suites; in a word, all the splendor, talent, beauty and celebrity of the capital city in its best season filled the President's saloon that night.

It must be confessed that our rustic boy, with his pride and genius and sensitiveness, was at first somewhat dazzled and dashed. Yet he need not have been. In all that brilliant assemblage there was not so handsome or graceful a man as Falconer O'Leary—with his classic profile, and his gipsy skin, his large, dark, flashing eyes, and shining raven hair, and his fine, free athletic figure, clothed in the simple suit of black—he was literally "handsome as Hercules ere his first labor," and more than one pair of bright eyes lingered on the boy and wondered who he was. *His* eyes sought their star, Maud Hunter. There she was!—the beautiful girl—seated on one of the side sofas, and, as usual, with her father and her mother.

And unobserved for a while he watched her, and nearly suffocated with strangely mixed emotions of love, jealousy, anger

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and admiration. Maud had been beautiful as a star, when clad in her plain, humble gown of black calico, without a single ornament. And now her peerless beauty was enhanced by all the advantages of a rich and elegant costume. She wore a robe of rose-colored brocade, made low on the neck, with short sleeves, and trimmed with a gossamer lace, pearl necklace and bracelets, and a string of pearls twined in and out with the sunny braids of her hair, and looping back the long, bright ringlets from her rosy cheeks. Her face was averted, and her head bowed over a bouquet that she held in her hand—she was blushing under the too admiring gaze and speech of some perfumed and moustached foreigner, who was bending over her—and whom Falconer at once stigmatized as an impudent, conceited French poodle! whom he should like to seize by the goatee and send whirling from the room.

"Can you tell me who that foreign jack-a-nape is, standing before Miss Hunter?" he asked of Donzoni, who was passing near.

"That! Oh! Is it possible you don't know? Why he is one of the foremost among the competitors for the hand of the beautiful heiress—said to be a dangerous, if not a successful rival of Sir Henry Percival."

"Who is he?" muttered Falconer, between his clenched teeth.

"Why Senor Don Emillio D'O——, the son of General the Count D'O——, of the Argentine Republic. One of the lions of the Washington saloons. I am surprised you did not know him!"

"No, I know nothing of the foreign monkeys that fine ladies choose to make *lions* of," growled Falconer, with a bitter look directed towards Maud, who had not as yet lifted her head.

Other gentlemen had approached the beauty, and among them were Mr. ——, the nephew of the President, a starred and ribboned foreign minister, and a military officer. They closed in and intercepted his view of the lovely girl, and he anathematised them for the act. The very heart in his bosom was corroding

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with chagrin. He had never seen Maud in full dress before, and now, insignificant as such a superficial matter really was, it seemed to the boy's vexed and morbid feelings, as if the very elegance of her dress, as well as the nature of her surroundings, separated her farther and farther from him. And when her face was turned away, she seemed quite another person from the little, loving creature in the plain black calico frock, who used to sit by his humble cottage fire and knit or sew—and who was all his own, with no one to interfere—and whom he could love, caress, chide, praise, flatter, quarrel with, and make up with at his pleasure, with no one to oppose. Now she was drawn away and lifted high above him—set like a star in the heavens above him, and he growled behind his set teeth,

"No! no! this is not my gentle love—this is every inch a superfine young lady—this is really the queen-beauty of Washington, and she has forgotten that she ever was anything else!"

Thus he thought and spoke when Maud's face was turned away, while she received the adulation, conveyed by glance and tone and sigh, of the circle around her. But presently the circle opened, and at the same moment the beautiful girl lifted up her head, and her eyes fell upon Falconer, and the smile of joy that suddenly illumined her sweet, pensive countenance, revealed that she was still at heart his Maud. She took and pressed her mother's fingers, and stooped and spoke to her with a gladdened sparkling glance. And Mrs. Hunter smiled gently, and looked towards Falconer.

But then the boy's proud, jealous, surly demon instigated him to grumble to himself that he would not stand there to be made a spectacle of, and turning abruptly, he moved off to a distant part of the saloon, where, from an oblique angle, unobserved himself, he continued to watch the maiden.

There was a little stir and murmur around him, which he soon understood to be occasioned by the quiet entrance of the President into the saloon. But the President was a subject of profound indifference to our boy, until he saw his venerable but still

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erect and imposing form standing before Mrs. Hunter and her daughter. He saw him bow and smile, and fall into a pleasant, lively chat with the mother, and then, after a little while, turn and address the daughter, and offer her his arm. And he saw Maud bow and smile and arise. And saw them pass off together for a promenade. The boy's jealous heart overflowed with bitterness.

"It was not enough," he said, "that her head was turned with flattery before, but now the President must do her this very unusual honor!"

And he stood and watched them as they joined the circle of promenaders that slowly revolved around the saloon. He watched the pair closely—they walked and talked like friends—in the President's manner to the beautiful girl there was a sort of fatherly fondness and familiarity, and in Maud's demeanor to his excellency, a filial respect and affection, that seemed to dispense with ceremony, and reduce their intercourse to a primitive simplicity.

After making the circuit of the saloon two or three times, the President led her back to her place, took the seat by her side, and continued the pleasant, lively chat with her there. Falconer observed them some time longer, and then, nodding his head grimly two or three times, he said to himself,

"Now I will try her—I will put her to a test—I will put them *all* to the test. Come! I will go and invite 'Miss Hunter' to take a promenade with *me*. Let us see if she will accept the invitation. Let us see if she will not rather be 'very sorry,' and too much fatigued, and beg to be excused. Oh! ha! ha! I know how it will be!"

And so saying, the boy deliberately sauntered up towards the sofa where they sat. The President was seated between Mrs. and Miss Hunter—Daniel Hunter on the other side of his wife. The four were gayly conversing with their heads together, and did not perceive the approach of Falconer until he stood before them. He bowed to the group, and then, turning to Maud, addressed to her some words of the merest common place courtesy,



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"A very pleasant evening, Miss Hunter—I hope that you have enjoyed it."

She looked up—the same flush of pleasure lighted up her face—and out flew her little white hand like a bird into his—and,

"Oh! Falconer, I am so glad to see you!" she said.

Spoiled child of society, as he had called her, she was still far more natural, simple, and genial, than himself.

"I am so glad to see you—but why have you not called?"

"'Circumstances beyond my control,' Miss Hunter, have deprived me of that honor. I need scarcely inquire, Miss Hunter, whether you are pleased with Washington city. Your looks assure me that you have enjoyed your winter here."

"Yes—it is a pleasant place in its season—we meet interesting people from all parts of the world here. And best of all, I like it because it is a truly democratic city; there is little exclusiveness here."

"I am truly rejoiced to hear that you have been so well pleased, Miss Hunter."

"And yet—and yet, sir, I might have been *better* pleased."

"Miss Hunter, if you are not already too weary, will you do me the honor to accept my arm for the promenade?"

"I will do myself that pleasure rather, if the President will excuse me," she said, turning with a beaming smile towards the latter.

The President assented with a bow and a smile, and a jest as to what he should answer were he forty years younger.

"And will your excellency permit me to present to you my earliest friend and foster brother, Mr. Falconer O'Leary, of Maryland? No doubt," she added, with a smile full of girlish gaiety and innocent freedom, "Mr. O'Leary, as in duty bound, made his bow to the President in his reception-room—but we know that his excellency finds it impossible to remember every one among his 'dear five *million* friends.'"

"Miss Hunter may do her utmost will with me," said the old gentleman, shaking his hand, and then welcoming Falconer with cordiality. And our boy felt a twinge of compunction and mor-

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tification to think that he had really committed the vandalism of passing through the reception-room, and entering the saloon, without having had the grace to pay his respects to the master of the house—not to say the President.

But this slight feeling of self-reproach was but as a ripple upon the stormy waves of his deeper and fiercer emotions, in which it was soon engulphed. He drew the little hand of the maiden within his arm, and joined the promenaders. The thick press of the crowd was now beginning to thin off—the saloon was only moderately full of company. And Miss Hunter, hanging on the arm of a stranger of distinguished manly grace and beauty, was now the observed of all observers. She was indifferent because unconscious of the attention they attracted—but he, on the contrary, with his heart bursting with suppressed emotion, and desirous above all things for a confidential interview with her—he was painfully conscious of the hundreds of eyes that saw them. He was pale and silent—*now* with her arm resting trustingly on his, with her touch thrilling him through every nerve and vein to his heart's core, he could no longer *affect* to address her with the common place nonsense of a drawing-room chit chat.

He looked towards Mr. and Mrs. Hunter to see how they took his promenade with their daughter, and whether they watched him. But no! they appeared cheerful and confident, or indifferent, he could not decide which. The President and Mr. Hunter were earnestly discussing some subject of interest, and Mrs. Hunter was listening to them with pleased attention. There was evidently no jealous surveillance on *their* part.

But oh! the crowd—the crowd with its argus eyes! pressing so close upon them too—two or three couples abreast, immediately in front of them—two or three couples treading on their heels behind—and a couple on the right hand, and a couple on the left—and no opportunity of relieving his bosom's weight by speaking one earnest heart-word to his beloved, that would not be heard by a dozen pair of ears, and repeated most likely by as many gossiping tongues. And this their first meeting after their stormy separation and long, weary absence!

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They made one or two turns around the room—and then another fear seized him; the company were now thinning off so fast, that he thought their parting hour would come before he had said what his heart was bursting to say. At last he stooped and whispered huskily,

"Maud Hunter! I *must* speak to you alone, or die!"

She pressed her fingers on the arm on which she rested, and without further reply, raised her head and looked toward a distant corner-sofa that had been lately occupied by a party, who were now leaving it to retire. Falconer followed her glance, and led her towards it. They reached it, and took the vacant seats.

"Maud," he commenced, "you said, a few moments since, that you might have been *better* pleased with Washington. Dearest Maud, will you tell me what you meant?"

"If you had called to see us frequently as others did and do, I should have been happier."

"*As others do!* And do you imagine, Maud Hunter, that *I* could visit you *as others do?* *I*, your inseparable companion from infancy. *I*, who, for years, and until the very moment of our sudden separation, looked upon you as my wife? Oh, Sylvia, how blind, deaf, insensible you must be to all I feel! to all I suffer! *Visit you as others do!*"

"I did not mean that, Falconer. You must know I did not mean that. I should have been much gladder to see you than to see any one else, my dearest brother!"

"*Your brother!* Hum—yes! You introduced me to the President as your *foster brother*—was it as your *foster brother* that you would have been glad to see me?"

"Yes, dear Falconer."

"Miss Hunter! I have heard a rumor to which I have hitherto given but little credence—but which your manner would seem to confirm."

"I do not understand you," said Maud.

"Miss Hunter—pardon me for asking a plain question, which I, nevertheless, think I may be considered entitled to ask, and to which I may have a right to a candid answer?"

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"What is it then, Mr. O'Leary?"

Mr. O'Leary! It was the first time she had ever so addressed him, and though he might have known that she could do no otherwise, since he persevered in calling her Miss Hunter—the name went through his bosom like a sword. He was very pale with restrained emotion—and his voice had an unnaturally low, level tone, as he inquired,

"Miss Hunter, pardon my presumption, but are you engaged to be married?"

"Falconer, you wound and distress me."

"I am grieved to do so—I beg pardon—nevertheless, I beseech you, answer my question frankly, and to the point—*are* you engaged to be married or not?"

"I consider myself engaged," answered the maiden in a low voice.

"Enough! enough, Miss Hunter! pardon my presumption, and permit me to lead you back to your party," said the boy, in a smothered, suffocating voice.

"Falconer, my dear brother, what is the matter?" asked Maud, in alarm.

"Nothing—nothing—nothing—except that I am what many men have been before me, and many men will be after me—a fool!" He got up and offered his arm, and she also arose with a look of perplexity and distress, took it, and suffered him to conduct her back to her parents. And then the boy bowed deeply and withdrew. He immediately left the saloon—the light of life seemed dying out within him—his cheeks were white and curdled—his lips bloodless—his very eyes stagnant in their sockets—he was sick of existence—he could derive no consolation or relief even from his art now; he could not have touched the Laocoon; he could not even have worked at the Niobe; he could do nothing he thought but die, if death would only come. Maud retired from the saloon with her parents.

On reaching home, she went immediately to her own chamber, where, throwing herself upon the bed, all elegantly dressed as she was, she gave way to a passionate fit of weeping.



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There came a tap at the door; she knew her mother's signal, and arose and opened it.

"Now, I have come to have a talk with you, child; now tell me what it is between you and Falconer? Why did he look so much like a death's head when he brought you back to us; and why have you been weeping so much? Tell your mother," said the lady, leading the maiden to the sofa, and embracing her.

Maud threw herself upon her mother's bosom, and wept heartily before she answered. And when Mrs. Hunter repeated the question, she replied,

"Oh, mother, dear mother, I do not understand it at all. All I do know is, that Falconer is very, very wretched, and behaves in a manner that is as incomprehensible, as it is torturing to us both."

"In what manner does he behave, my dear? What does he say? What does he do? He must be very mistaken, and very unreasonable."

"Oh, mamma, I could not explain it to you, because I do not comprehend it myself; only I feel that we are just now both very miserable, and that I am ungrateful, dear mother, in not being perfectly happy with you and my best father."

"My love, tell me all that passed between yourself and Falconer, and I shall be better able to judge."

"Well, dear mother, I will; listen," said Maud, beginning, and telling the lady word for word the whole of the short, but significant conversation between herself and her wild lover. In conclusion, she said, "Now, dear mother, what *can* any one make of such conduct? just at the very moment I assured him that I considered myself bound to him, that he should have changed in such a deathly way, and left me so abruptly."

The lady sat in thought a few moments, and then a smile came over her face, and embracing her daughter, she said,

"I see it all, my love! There is a misunderstanding between you. You were speaking at cross purposes."

"How, dearest mother?"

"Why, thus; it is clear enough to me; he has heard of a silly rumor of your being engaged to Percival."

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"Is there such a rumor, mamma? Oh, I am very much mortified!"

"Yes, there is such a report, my dear. I have contradicted it wherever I have heard it. Yet it still prevails."

"I am *very* sorry! And that unhappy Falconer has heard it."

"Undoubtedly, and *he* was talking about your rumored engagement to Percival, while *you* were thinking only of your pledge to himself! That explains his wretchedness."

"But, mamma," said Maud, gravely, "it is impossible that Falconer could, for an instant, entertain the idea of my being so false! No, no, mamma! Falconer never, never thought so ill of me!"

"My child, as long as Falconer lived with you, he evidently does not fully understand and appreciate you. His judgment is blinded by his passions."

"And, oh, mamma! could Falconer believe that I could be a traitor to my life-long love, and engage myself to another?"

"It is evident that he did so, my child; and that he understood you to confess such an engagement."

"Oh, how *could* Falconer? How *could* he? Oh, mamma, let us undeceive him! Oh, mamma! tell me how I can undeceive him at once!" said Maud, clasping her hands.

The lady drew her to her bosom, and gravely and sweetly answered,

"My dear child must not move in this matter at all. It does not become her to do so. Besides, it would do no good, my love; it would do harm. Falconer must be left to suffer some of the painful consequences of his own mad passions and rash acts, before he will ever think it necessary to bring them into subjection to his reason and conscience. It will not do always to interfere to counteract the wholesome discipline of suffering."

"But, oh, mamma! is not this a dangerous thing? He is *so* wretched! What if in his anguish and despair he should ruin himself, as I have heard of others doing? What if he should be lost to us for ever?"

"He will not! Your father, love, watches over him with the

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affectionate interest of a parent. Your father will prevent his coming to evil, and ensure his coming to good."

"My dearest, dearest father! Oh, mamma! my undivided heart—my whole life, devoted solely to him, would not repay him for all we owe him!"

"Hush, love! It is irreligious even to talk of repaying him. Can we repay our Heavenly Father for all we owe him?"

"And the greatest blessing our Heavenly Father has given *us*, mamma, is my earthly father!"

"Yes, Maud! Yes, love! for there is none like him in the world. Daniel Hunter was always good and great beyond other men. And every advancing year he has grown better and greater. When we were young, Maud, I loved him as much as I thought it was *possible* for heart to love. And every advancing year I have loved him better and better. And now that we are growing old, I love him best of all!" said Augusta, with tears of deep joy welling up in her eyes.

Then, after a little while, she said,

"We have had trials and sorrows, Maud; who has ever escaped them? We have had bitter political enemies; we have been envied, hated, slandered; our best actions ascribed to the worst motives; our most earnest purposes often thwarted, our brightest hopes often darkened. And we have had domestic sorrows—crushing, heart-breaking sorrows. *Your* loss was such an one. Yet, still, still I have been so *blessed* in *him*, Maud! so *blessed* in *him*. That is the reason I want my darling to be blessed in her husband—then all the joys of her life will be multiplied, and all the sorrows of her life will be comforted. And I feel confident my child will be blessed. I feel such faith in Daniel Hunter, that I am sure he will convert and redeem her Falconer, and make him worthy to be his son. My darling, hope and be comforted!"

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## CHAPTER XL.

### CINCINNATUS.

To speak thy truth amid the hooting crowd,
Then stand apart, obscure to man, with God
The patriot of the future knows his place,
Though in the present shady be his seat,
And his laurels deepen but the shade.—*Horne.*

WHILE the March winds were still piping, Daniel Hunter and his family once more sought their too often forsaken home at Howlet Hall. Mr. Hunter immediately turned his attention towards the carrying on of those incomplete works of improvement, that years before, under his favorable auspices, had been commenced in that section of country.

The new parsonage, designed and built by Mr. Hunter at the Summit, for the Lovels, was now completely finished and comfortably furnished, and ready to receive its tenants. And early in May the young pair, with their infant brood, migrated thither.

Letty Hunter accompanied them—to help to take care of the children, she said. Had Letty only consulted her own comfort, convenience and happiness, she would certainly have preferred to remain with her almost adored brother and his beloved wife and daughter at Howlet Hall. For though of all his sisters and brothers, Letty, in character and disposition, least resembled Daniel Hunter, she had the truest appreciation, and highest admiration of his character, and the warmest sympathy with his thoughts, feelings and purposes; and she was always happiest when forming one of his blessed household. But from her youth up, Letty Hunter had been the cheerful little Cinderella—the singing little goody-two-shoes of her family—and had always merrily resigned her own interests and inclinations to the necessities or the exactions of others, as if such self-sacrifice had been the most natural thing in the world, and the finest fun "alive." I hinted before, that Letty, like everybody else in the world, had had her own particular trial—and it was briefly this:—About



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the time that Mr. Lovel came courting her sister Lucy—Letty also had a lover, in every way most worthy of the love which she gave him without measure. He was a poor and struggling son of the people—that did not matter to Letty, except that it made her love him all the more; his small business lay in a distant western village—that did not matter either—Letty would have gone with him to Kamschatka or to Terra-del-fuego. But, alas! all her brothers and sisters were married and gone, except Lucy and herself—and if they also married, their old parents would be left alone; and as the idea of making a sacrifice for others had never once entered the brain of the petted beauty, Lucy—nothing remained but for Letty to resign her lover, which she quietly did. And, disappointed and dejected, he departed for his western home, while she remained the light and warmth and comfort of her father's and her mother's fireside. And she jested and sang as much as ever, though for a time she grew thin and pale; and when they prescribed boneset and wild cherry as a good nervous tonic, she laughed and took it. For years no one ever knew the sacrifice that Letty had made. And to the day of their death, her aged parents never suspected it. And when the venerable pair were gathered to their fathers, Letty found great comfort in the thought that she had remained with them, and had cherished and supported them to the very last, and that they never had imagined how much it had cost her. Letty was now thirty-three years of age, and looking older and dressing older, yet not *feeling* older than that. The love of her youth still lived in her heart, and kept it young. That is sometimes a blessing, but oftener a curse to its subject. It is a blessing, when joined with a strong mind—a curse, when linked with a weak one. In the former case, it will make its subject sympathetic and attractive—in the latter, it will make him or her only affected and ridiculous. It made Letty wiser, more loving, more sympathizing with the young, while it misled her into no youthful affectations.

During all these years, and since her parents' death, Letty had had several very eligible offers of marriage; but she had politely

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and thankfully declined them all. "*Her* heart still clung to the mouldering past." Many loved Letty, but few understood her, and *none* guessed that under that quaint, quizzing countenance —below that queer, funny, comical, ever-changing, ever-varying smile and glance—in that heart that seemed to be an ever-springing, ever-sparkling fount of merry wisdom, wit and humor —there lived and burned an eternal, passionate longing, unquenchable by time and absence—yea, by death and the grave! To see him once more, to hear him talk, to discover what it was that had kept them apart these many, many years, that they might otherwise have passed together—to have all this explained and made up, and the broken ties of their youth re-joined—to be re-united—to spend the noon and evening of life with him she had missed in the early morning—this was the desire that in its intensity caught her breath away, when she dared to think of the possibility of its fulfilment. Since their sad parting she had never once heard directly from the lover of her youth—(her *old friend*, as in her heart she gingerly called him, for Letty, at times, was thoroughly ashamed of the secret passion that would not yield to years and reason.) She knew nothing about him, except that the little western village to which he had emigrated was now a thriving town, that he himself was a prosperous merchant—*and that he was unmarried*—and she felt that he loved her still—she felt it, without fully believing it, for the spirit often discerns a truth that the intellect refuses to acknowledge, and the proud head often laughs to scorn the simple wisdom of the heart, until time, the final umpire, decides between them. So Letty, against all circumstantial evidence to the contrary, and against her own reason and judgment, felt that her *old friend* cherished her memory still. But if so, why had he not sought her? Ah! there was some misconception, some misunderstanding. And sometimes, when the desire to see him again became so strong, so importunate, such a silent cry wrung from her heart, she would feel an almost irresistible impulse to write to him. But something would always restrain her; something would always oblige her to crush down the impulse, to stifle the cry, and go

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on in silent, cheerful endurance, as before. And so the weary years passed, and Letty became an old maid. Yet she was never without a suitor—the present one being Mr. Bill Ipsy, whom Letty's blended characteristics of fun, frolic, wisdom and goodness, had amused, attracted, and completely won. But Letty would none of him, any more than of anybody else. She laughed at him, and said that she meant to be "an old maid governess" to her little nieces and nephews. Her friends never surmised the true reason why Letty remained single, for the very name and existence of her *old friend*, Joseph Barton, was forgotten by them. She was an enigma, beyond their solving. They said she was entirely too hard to please in a husband—too fastidious and particular for a world like this, and a life like ours. They said that she was *cut out* for an old maid. Well, it might have been so; but if to have a constant, integral heart, and to lack the facility of shifting her affections to any object that chance might throw in her way—was to be "cut out for an old maid"—it was a right sorry compliment to her sisters, who were cut out for anything else. But this is a digression, for why should we concern ourselves with the past history of Letty, who was one of those persons whose outer life is entirely devoted to others, and whose inner life is a secret to all. To resume—I said that she would gladly have remained with her favorite brother and his family, at Howlet Hollow; but she saw a young brood of babies, having a fond mother, yet sadly needing a mother's care, and she resigned the beloved companionship, intellectual pursuits, and elegant ease in her brother's home, and went to the village with the Lovels, to assist her pretty, frivolous sister Lucy in bringing up a nursery full of infants. In doing this, Letty never thought that she was making any unreasonable sacrifice, or doing anything more than the plain duty required of her. And to Daniel Hunter's earnest expostulation, and entreaty that she would make his house her permanent home, she replied—

"Not where I should be happiest, dear brother Dan, but where I should be most useful, must I live." And so she departed.

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And Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, with their daughters, and their relative, Sir Henry Percival, remained together at the Hall.

Sir Henry Percival was certainly as deeply smitten with the beautiful Maud Hunter, as it was possible for him to be, and yet he passed the whole of his time in attendance upon Honoria! It is difficult to explain exactly how this happened—it might have been necessity, habit, or fatality—the compulsion of surrounding circumstances and of people's expectations—the obligation enforced upon him by his antecedents—the tyranny of the past over the present; or it might have been only the young lady's own exaction, which in common gallantry the young gentleman could not resist. At all events, they were always together—in their early morning ride, in their forenoon readings in the library, in the afternoon drive, in the evening lounge in the drawing-room, everywhere, at all hours of the day, they were together. And the Hunters looked upon their engagement as a settled thing, and wondered how any one could have been so mistaken as to have given him Maud—Maud, who was now the inseparable companion of her parents.

And Daniel Hunter continued to occupy himself with the improvement of his neighborhood. New stone-quarries were opened in the Barrier, and new coal and iron mines were searched for and discovered in the Ridge. A woollen-factory, and an iron-foundry, and saw-mills were erected at the Summit. And good and reliable inducements were held out to mechanics and laborers, from the over-stocked city, to come and settle there. A county paper was established, and a high school for boys projected. And private buildings went up rapidly at the Summit. And new roads were cut, and a railroad was contemplated. But these plans of improvement required *time* to realize them. Even with Daniel Hunter "to the fore" and his strong "shoulder to the wheel," they could not be perfected in a year.

Daniel Hunter, with his constitutionally affectionate though unimpassioned nature, and with his habitual endeavor to unite and harmonize his public, social, domestic life—had drawn his wife and daughter deeply into all his wishes and purposes for the good

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of the neighborhood. And Mrs. Hunter and Maud, when no urgent household duty compelled their presence at home, were ever to be found with him upon his scene of labor. And very often he appealed to the taste and judgment of wife and daughter to embellish the design of some building, or decide the bend of some road.

These were delightful days to the three. To be thus laboring for the welfare of their neighborhood, and actively employed out doors during all the beautiful spring and summer weather, brought them vigorous health and cheerfulness.

Maud found herself full of hope and joy, for she had perfect faith in her father's power to bring her early trials to a happy issue, and through him she often heard that Falconer was still at Donzoni's studio, and in a fair way of doing well.

Mrs. Hunter was happier than ever before—happier in herself, and happiest in her husband and daughter.

Even Daniel Hunter had lost that habitually pondering, careworn, anxious expression that seemed to have permanently settled on his countenance. And he now looked younger, stronger, and in better health, than for years before. And his wife thanked God in her heart as she said,

"Yes! this active, useful life of a country gentleman, is exactly what he needs now—it is exactly the life that will unbend and refresh and recreate his health and energies."

"Yes! this was a delightful regenerating life for him; would it might have lasted longer! But Daniel Hunter was, above all things, a statesman and politician, and he could not by any possibility divide himself from the political interests of his country—they attracted him with an irresistible force.

And now a new question of national policy arose, of a nature so important and exciting, comprising in itself so many bitterly conflicting interests, that the two great political parties of the country were shivered into fractions, and the old boundary lines of politics destroyed in the new storm.

Daniel Hunter's own party was split by the maddest of radical factions, who dubbed themselves the "Out and Outers,"

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while the conservative half were honored with the name of the "Old Guards."

The State elections for Representatives to Congress was approaching, and this stormy question was shaking the Commonwealth to its very centre. Conventions were called, and then violently broken up. Mass meetings were summoned to deliberate, but met only to fight. Stump orators went abroad, and sometimes got praised and feasted, and carried in triumph, and sometimes mobbed and half murdered. And the Old Guards and the Out and Outers never met singly, or in numbers, without pitching into a battle of words or blows—*a l'outrance.* This desperate state of affairs, with his party divided against itself, as well as against all other parties, gave Daniel Hunter the greatest pain and anxiety—trouble that was soon augmented by a letter from Donzoni, informing him that his protegé, Mr. Falconer O'Leary had left his studio, left incomplete two or three very promising works of art, and that he had gone "to parts unknown."

The simple fact was this—At the very first note of alarm, at the first sound of the trumpet heralding a fierce, political strife, Falconer had thrown down chisel and hammer, model and copy, rushed from the studio, and hurled himself, body and soul, pell-mell into the very thickest of the fight. And while gentle Maud was weeping over his disappearance, Daniel Hunter soon heard of him, stumping the district from one end to the other, and attracting to him all the fierce, political incendiaries, and maddened malcontents that comprised the radical faction of the old party. According to the state constitution, Falconer O'Leary was as yet not of an age to become the candidate for their Representative in Congress; but as there is no statute limitation to the combined power of a resolute will, fierce passions, and overwhelming eloquence, Falconer O'Leary was certainly the most powerful champion they had in the field—the very Achilles of the Out and Outers.

"Oh! this will never do," said Daniel Hunter to his wife. "That boy will do an incalculable amount of mischief to himself,

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as well as to others. No man can serve two masters—he never can be an eminent sculptor and a successful politician. He is the most unmanageable fellow I ever met with in my life, but he must be drawn out of this somehow. *Art* is his true vocation, not politics—he was never intended by nature for a politician—to him politics is a totally illegitimate occupation, to which he was first instigated by his fierce, unreasonable antagonism to myself, and afterwards by the pleasing discovery of his own power of eloquence. And guided by the same spirit of opposition, he has taken false views, and adopted without examination most dangerous principles, of which he will be ashamed when he grows older and comes to understand them. No—politics is certainly not his mission—he is too much governed by passion, too little by judgment, for that career. And nothing but the spirit of antagonism, and the love of excitement, inspire him to follow it. And nothing but a severe disappointment will cool the fever and calm the delirium. Disappointment is always the test of a vocation—it destroys an imaginary one, while it strengthens a real one. And such a disappointment must come to him. It will prostrate and embitter him for a while, but it will cure him of his political mania. And then let him return and devote himself to art, his true mistress; and for the transient notoriety of the politician win the eternal fame of the artist. So, every way in which nature and Providence never intended him to walk shall be blocked up, and the true and legitimate path of his genius shall be made straight for him."

It is not to be supposed that Daniel Hunter was forgotten in this contest. Some time before the electioneering war had reached its highest point of excitement, Mr. Hunter had been repeatedly, and by many voices, summoned to the rescue of the Old Guards. He was called to the field of political action by appeals made to him through the columns of newspapers, by letters from personal and political friends, and finally by a committee from the Old Guard Convention, who travelled from the distant city in which it was in session, to solicit Mr. Hunter to become their candidate for the House of Representatives, and to

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show him the opinion of the Convention that he was the only man certain to win over the votes of the majority of the faction, and thus reunite and consolidate the party.

Thus urged, Daniel Hunter consented once more to enter the arena of political strife. And the committee departed with his answer.

This determination of Mr. Hunter was excessively distasteful to all his family; but it was from various and opposite reasons that they disliked it.

Miss Honoria was extremely vexed, because, as she confided to her friend Mrs. Lovel,

"My father can win no new fame from an electioneering victory over a—*village stone cutter*—who is, as I am informed, the nominee of the Out and Outers. And then only to think of a man like my father, who has filled the highest offices in the State—who has been years in the Senate—who has been resident minister at the highest courts of Europe—has been in the Cabinet at Washington—who has been twice Governor of M——; I say, now just think of the mortification it is to me to have him come down from that position, to run against a village stone-cutter, and take his seat in the House of Representatives by the side of the newest men there—village mechanics, too lazy to work, though not to make stump speeches, and country pettifogging lawyers, too worthless for their legitimate business, and who have taken to politics."

Mrs. Lovel coincided entirely with Miss Honoria's sentiments, sympathized with her feelings, and said she wished her brother were not so—"peculiar."

Mrs. Hunter's objections were more reasonable. She grieved to see him return again to that field of harassing labor in which his health and strength and peace had been already almost exhausted. She remembered the disgraceful scene of opposition, abuse and violence that had met him on his return from abroad. And to see him take the stump again, and expose his noble head to the aggressive and insulting taunts and missiles—or the almost equally humiliating shouts and laudations of the mob; oh, this



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required all her faith and patience to enable her to bear it. *She* knew that Daniel Hunter's public career was or ought to be over—that there were no new honors to be gained by him in entering again upon a public life. And, noble woman though she was, she was not Spartan enough to be willing to see her husband sacrifice himself for the Commonwealth alone.

Letty perfectly agreed with Mrs. Hunter, and shared her misgivings relative to the result. Maud grieved that her father left off his pleasant daily rides with them from place to place, to watch over the "improvements," and that he gave up his cozy evening talks and readings—that he was absent from them so frequently, and for so long a time—that his hours at home were mostly taken up by political friends and adherents, and mostly that he lost his cheerfulness, and grew thoughtful, anxious and haggard. He had in truth, a violently prejudiced faction to meet and overcome. And had Daniel Hunter been the candidate for any very high office, it is probable that—"the Courtier," "the Ariscocrat," "the Renegade Republican," as they miscalled him —would have been defeated. But when he became a candidate only to be their Representative in Congress—a post which even his enemies knew very well could bring *him* no new glory—and when his friends made use of that circumstance to convince the people that their oldest friend and advocate—the very patriarch of the people's party, the very veteran commander of their host, was willing to serve them in an humbler capacity, was willing to enter the ranks and do battle for their rights, side by side with the newest recruits; when this was felt and understood, then indeed there was a great revolution in Daniel Hunter's favor; and as reaction is always equal to action, the return of the ebbing tide of popular favor was tremendous—was overwhelming.

It was in vain that Falconer O'Leary, the handsome, impassionate, enthusistic stump orator, harangued the people with all his might, flying from station to station through the Congressional district; making a dozen fiery speeches in a day and night, denouncing the Old Guards and Daniel Hunter, and grossly misrepresenting, because honestly misapprehending his character,

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motives, principles and politics. And crowds, while under the immediate power of his eloquence, were carried away by his mesmeric influence, and huzzaed, and shouted, and cheered him and his measures to his heart's content, and dispersed to get drunk in his honor. And afterwards, when their blood was cool, and their heads clear, they went and voted for Daniel Hunter.

In the mean time, passages from these denunciatory speeches were frequently reported and quoted, and the members of Mr. Hunter's family often saw them in the columns of the newspapers. And the sight of one such always gave Maud great distress. After, one day, reading a bitter vituperative invective, launched by the fiery young orator against her father, she dropped the paper, and suddenly burst into a passionate fit of tears. Her father took her hand, and sought to soothe and quiet her. But she refused to be comforted, saying, between her sobs, that this acrimonious hatred between two that she loved so much, would break her heart. And her father calmly and silently held her hand, until the gust was past. And then, when he could get a look at her tearful, flushed, half hidden face, he smiled on her, with that smile of conscious power, noble benignity and liberal interpretation, that ever excited her gratitude and love, and inspired her with faith and hope; and he said,

"My dear, never mind. I do not like Falconer the less upon account of his frank, hearty, cordial, thorough-going antagonism to myself. It grows out of a misconception so great, that when it is discovered, the boy's wild, honest heart will experience a revolution in my favor, of such a nature, that his returning affection will be apt to embarrass me more than ever his hatred did. My dear, be hopeful for him—his traits of character are essentially noble and heroic—his errors, those of youth and enthusiasm. He will come right."

"Father, my dear father—oh! your patience is like the patience of our Lord."

"Hush, my dear, your words border upon irreverence. Besides, it is not all patience, my child—for, Maud, I really *like* that boy, and his vituperative denunciations only make me smile,

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to think how honestly he hurls them, and how honestly he will one day retract them. Yes, Maud, I really do like that boy very much—whether it is for your sake only, or whether it is because, with his passion, and his genius, and his demon, he gives me such a deal of anxiety, I do not know, but certainly I like him more and more every day.

This was true. Daniel Hunter, from many different causes, had conceived for the wild young radical leader a really paternal affection. And when the crisis came, and the election was decided, and Daniel Hunter was returned, by an overwhelming majority;—amid the triumph and rejoicing he felt a pang of sympathy with the disappointment and chagrin of his fiery young antagonist; he longed to pour into his ear the words of counsel, comfort and strength: he felt increased anxiety upon account of the boy, and made numerous inquiries concerning him; fruitless inquiries, for immediately after the decision of the election, Falconer had disappeared from the neighborhood.

Mr. Hunter, however, wrote to his friend Donzoni, telling him that he felt great interest in the well-doing of the young sculptor; that he knew the boy, in his disappointment, dejection and morbid pride, would never voluntarily present himself at the studio he had left so suddenly and cavalierly; and requesting him to inquire out and write to his former pupil, and *invite* his return.

In a month after sending this letter, Mr. Hunter had the gratification of receiving one from the old sculptor, informing him that he had recovered his student—that Falconer was with him, but so depressed, so ill, so despairing, as to be almost incapable of work. He wrote that the youth had expsessed a desire to go to Rome, to study the old masters, but that he had not the means of paying even his travelling expenses, to say nothing of the cost of living after he should get there. He farther wrote, that he thought nothing could so, *in all respects*, benefit the young artist, as a few years' residence in that old city of the arts.

Mr. Hunter read this letter with unqualified pleasure, and then communicated its contents to his wife, and said,

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"Now this falls out exactly as I would have it, exactly as I anticipated. He wants to go and cultivate his art in Rome, and I can send him there."

Mrs. Hunter's eyes questioned him.

"Ah! I see what you are doubting, Augusta. You think that if that young man never gets to Rome in any other way, he will never consent to owe his visit to *me*. Very likely! if he is permitted to know anything about it. But that shall not be. He shall go, and never dream that he goes at any one's cost but his own. This is my plan: only yesterday, I procured for our friend, Major ——, an appointment as Chargé at Rome. I will get him to advertise for a private secretary to a gentleman about to go to Rome, for a residence of several years. I will take care that Falconer sees this advertisement. He will be sure to seize the opportunity, and answer it. He will be engaged, of course, and will accompany his employer to Rome."

"Yes, but in the meantime, while occupied with the duties of his situation, how will he be able to study his art?"

"I might answer you, love, that with a real devotion to art, he would *find* opportunities—but I mean not so—I mean to clear his way. By a private understanding with the Major, (who has already one secretary appointed by the government,) I will arrange it so that his situation shall be a *sinecure*, and a *vehicle* for the income that I shall settle upon him, and that shall be paid him through Major ——, in the guise of his secretary's salary."

"That is an excellent plan, indeed. And I presume Major —— will gladly accede to your proposal

"Certainly; it will make no trouble or expense for the Major, and he will be glad at once to oblige me and to secure a desirable addition to his party. It will also fall directly in with the Major's benevolence and love of patronizing genius, to afford this young man all the advice and assistance he may require."

"Your purpose is certainly admirable, and—but I did not intend the impertinence of praising you, Daniel Hunter!" said the lady, with eyes soul-full of love and honor fixed upon his face



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In a few weeks, the plan that Mr. Hunter had sketched was fully carried out. And Falconer, with a handsome outfit and liberal provision, and totally ignorant of his magnanimous benefactor, went to Rome with Major ——, ostensibly as his private secretary, *really* as Daniel Hunter's protegé, committed to the Major's care to guide and assist in the study of sculpture.

And about the first of December, Mr. Hunter went to Washington for the purpose of taking his seat in the House of Representatives. He was accompanied by his family, and once more the syrens of society, fashion, gaiety, adulation, vainly wove their charms around the head of the beautiful Maud—they could not corrupt her lovely simplicity and integrity of character. And one reason why they could not do so, was because the maiden always had her mother near her, to counteract the evil influence. And thus the season passed.

Near the close of the session, Mr. Hunter had elaborated and perfected a plan for the adjustment of the great national dispute that had nearly broken up all old political parties, and set new factions in deadly opposition to each other. This plan he embodied in a bill which he brought before the House. It was met with sharp opposition—there was a long-continued virulent conflict, too violent and noisy to be honored with the name of a debate, and which made the House of Representatives resemble more a gathering of revolutionary *sans culottes* than a well-ordered American Congress. But before the session was over, Daniel Hunter had the satisfaction of seeing his bill pass both Houses of Congress.

The success of this bill gave unbounded satisfaction to the country at large. And never, in the palmiest days of his popularity, had "Daniel Hunter" been so much the idol of the people. Throughout the country, illuminations, bon-fires, torch-light processions, etc., were got up in his honor, and to celebrate the passage of his bill.

And despite all his dislike to parade, and his love of simplicity, his return home—followed, attended and met by crowds, noisy with enthusiasm—resembled more nearly a royal progress than

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the journey of a mere republican citizen. And whenever he appeared, the multitude sent up to heaven, in shouts of gratitude, the name of DANIEL HUNTER!

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE SECRET.

"What is life, father?" "A battle, my child,
Where the strongest lance may fail;
Where the wariest eyes may be beguiled,
And the stoutest heart may quail;
Where the foes are gathered on every hand,
And rest not, day nor night,
And the feeble little ones must stan
In the thickest of the fight."—*Anonymous.*

DANIEL HUNTER, with his family, was again at Howlet Hall, and engaged in the superintendence of his works of improvement in that neighborhood. And Maud was still the inseparable companion of her father and mother, in all their walks, rides, and drives around the county. But Maud was no longer the bright-lipped, sunny-eyed maiden, called for her radiant beauty the "Star of Silver Creek." Since Falconer had departed for a foreign land, without having previously bidden her good-by, she had grown pale and pensive, and with all her efforts to be cheerful, her very sweetest smiles were sadder than another's tears. The young girl's patient sorrow distressed her mother very much One day she followed her daughter to her chamber, and embracing her, said:

"My darling, why don't you talk to me about Falconer? you are always thinking about him—talk as freely to me as you please. Do not close your heart against me, my child. Do you think there is any one in the world who loves you more, understands you more, or can sympathize with you, and advise you better than your *mother?*" And she drew the pale girl to her bosom, most tenderly caressing her.

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"Dearest, sweetest mamma, I do not close my heart against you. The Lord forbid it! All the angels know I have not a secret from you in my bosom—but—"

"But what, my love?"

Maud placed her hand in her mother's, and turned away her head to conceal the rising tears, as she said, in a faltering voice,

"I wished to conquer—in silence—this—this—this *disposition to low spirits*, mamma." Then turning around, with a bright smile, the maiden added, archly,—"Daniel Hunter's daughter must not turn a love-sick girl on your hands, mamma!"

"Bravo! my little girl! *That* she must not," said the lady, answering the smile with one as bright.

"And then, mamma, I have one excuse to offer for suffering myself to fall into this depression that gives you pain. You know, dear mother, it is not as if Falconer were a *recent* acquaintance—the lover of a few weeks' standing. We were such *old, old* friends, mamma! We were playmates and companions ever since I remember anything—and we loved, and played, and quarrelled, and slapped each other in the face; and then grieved, and coaxed, and kissed, and made up, and were better friends than before, ever since we were babies. Only as we grew up, we grew more refined in our cruelty, and when we disagreed we struck each other on the *heart* instead of the face. But that did not often happen, sweet mother; and then she smiled again very archly, as she continued: "We were like a pair of pigeons hatched in the same box, and wherever you saw one perched, you might be sure that the other was flying around very near. We used to go almost everywhere together. I was naturally a cowardly little thing, especially afraid of *falling* and of broken bones: and yet when Falconer would take his fowling-piece and go off up the mountain in the morning before I was up, I would be sure to go after him, climbing the steep rocks, and breaking through the prickly pine and cedar thickets, guided only by the occasional report of his gun, at the risk of tumbling down a precipice, or getting a load of buckshot in my head, and with the certainty of meeting a rueful welcome from Falconer, who would

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be sure to quarrel with me for endangering my limbs, or, what hurt me more, throw away his gun and sit down and *cry*, to think how near he came shooting me. I always felt his troubles and his triumphs with far keener sense than my own—indeed, I had none but his—" Here, by her own fond memory and her mother's sympathy, the maiden was beguiled into many a reminiscence of the past. Before she concluded, the tears were again swimming in her eyes, and she said, "Sweet mother, we were never separated before. And now, we are not only separated, but estranged; he has sailed without even bidding me farewell; he has departed embittered and unhappy; gone so far, and for such a long, indefinite time, and the end of all this is so distant and uncertain," and then her fortitude gave way altogether, and she dropped her head upon her mother's shoulder, and wept heartily.

Mrs. Hunter folded her arms around her, in silence, until her fit of sobbing had subsided, and then she kisssed her, and said, cheerfully,

"And yet, my darling, in all this there is also much that is very hopeful and encouraging. In the first place, you feel sure that Falconer loves you, and only you, with his whole heart; and that he will so love you for ever; don't you?"

"Oh, yes! I am certain of it, mamma! certain of it! I have heard of many a successful plot to make mischief between a pair of hearts, but not the most skillful conspirator that ever sold his own soul at a bad bargain, could by any set of circumstances make me doubt Falconer's loyalty."

"Well, then, how much comfort in that! that in itself might be everything! And then, besides, you know that, notwithstanding his very erroneous opinions, and his rash, fiery, impetuous way of propagating them, the young man has really a very fine nature; he is noble-hearted, high-spirited, talented, and full of the richest promise for the future. Don't you know that?"

"Oh, yes, dear mother, I know it; and yet—"

"Well, my darling?"

"Oh, mother! while he is so estranged, so opposed to my dearest, my best, my most honored father!"

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"Well, my love! what of that, since your father is not opposed to him? Shall the wisdom and power of maturity befoiled by the folly and weakness of youth? Daniel Hunter looks upon Falconer with the affectionate tolerance of a parent for a young, wrong-headed, yet not wrong-hearted son. *His* care unseen, you know, has sent him to Rome, provides for his welfare there, watches over his interests, and receives constant intelligence of his progress. The last news from Rome, assures us that Falconer is pursuing his studies in sculpture with the greatest zeal, and under the best possible auspices. Look up, my child! Have faith and hope, as well as love."

"I will, mother! I will, best mother! Oh! believe me, I often take myself to task for my depression. Yes indeed—when I look around me upon the world, and see so many real, hard, stern sorrows; so much deep, unmitigated, destructive suffering; why my own little personal trouble, by the side of *such*—seems trivial and fantastical—and I feel half ashamed to indulge it. And I ask myself—how *dare* I, richly blessed as I am with youth and health, and friends and fortune, and education and abilities—how *dare* I sit down in selfish repining over one single selfish desire unfulfilled, or only deferred—and not rather rise up and go and minister to those who are *really* afflicted? Yes, dear mother, your lessons and your example have not been all in vain; they have not been thrown away upon your child. I *have* so communed with myself, and I have made resolutions, which, with the help of our heavenly Father, I mean to carry out."

"One of the uses of affliction, my dearest child, is to impress that lesson."

"And then, dearest mother, when I have gone among the suffering poor; when I have entered one of those miserable Irish cabins on the mountain, and found human beings; men and women and children, sunk in brutual ignorance and coarseness; living amid squallor, filth and disease; enduring the pangs of hunger, cold, and illness; without relief for the present or hope for the future; almost without love for each other, or faith in God! I have thought—oh! I have asked myself, who hath

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made me to differ? how *dare* I live for myself and not for these? And even when I go into one of our comfortable negro quarters, (though we should not think them comfortable for ourselves, should we, mamma?) and when I see some poor, old, superannuated negro, after his life of toil, dying by inches, on his coarse, hard bed, in his rude, rough room; and see him leaving his children and grandchildren, with no hope of a better fate than his own, I ask myself in fear and trembling—my God! who has made me to differ? How dare I grieve for myself and not for these also? And oh! how I realize that it is no merit of mine, that I am not one of them—as it is no fault of theirs that they are what they are! No! no fault of theirs that they are poor and ignorant, and diseased and hideous—as it is no merit of mine, that I am rich and intelligent, and fair and healthy. And, oh, then I inquire—does not this great difference make me fearfully responsible for all the advantages I possess? fearfully accountable for all the sufferings I might relieve? Mother! dearest mother! *my* sin has been, that I knew how to do right, and did it not! But it shall be so no longer. Your teachings shall not be so cast away. I will be different. I will live a useful and an unselfish life."

"And be cheerful, my own dear girl! Let us have the joy of seeing our dear girl cheerful."

"Oh, you shall see that I will be so, mamma. I have not been all that I ought to have been to you and my father. I have not been bright and joyous, and a renewal of your youth; but I will be henceforth, mamma."

"With the Lord's blessing, my love."

"Yes, with the Lord's blessing, mamma."

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In the meantime, Miss Honoria, as usual, monopolized Sir Henry Percival. That undecided young gentleman had been absent during several months past, making a tour of the south. And now, on his return, he was paying his farewell visit to Howlet Hall. His incentive in going on that journey had not been so much the desire of travelling and of seeing new sections

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of the country, as the wish to cast off the yoke of Miss Honoria, break the charm of habit and of expectancy, and afterwards return to Howlet Hall a free man, to transfer his attentions to Maud Hunter.

Alas for him! He *had* returned; but the family, who were not at all in his secret, quietly and tacitly abandoned him to the tender mercies of Miss Honoria, who calmly, and as an understood matter of course, took possession of her serf. And the last state of that man was worse than the first. It was in vain that he struggled against his self-made fate; it was like beating the air. Miss Honoria always *wanted* him, and she always *had* him. And Maud was always with her parents, busy, occupied and unobservant. And even had the opportunity offered, he dared not offend Miss Hunter by presenting himself with any abrupt disclosure of his preference. Too often he had pictured to himself the look of indignant astonishment with which it would have been met.

And it was in vain that he tried to approach her by extremely refined and delicate degrees; for her instincts and perceptions were still *more* refined and delicate than his advances, and at the least dropping of his tone as he addressed her, or melting of his eye as it sought hers, her beautiful, radiant face would, as it were, *freeze* into a distance and hauteur that chilled him to the heart. This manner was not *assumed* by the young girl—it was the natural and involuntary revelation of her feelings, as unconscious as it was sincere. She could not help it—

> Something of a cold disgust,
> Wonderful and most unjust,
> Something of a surly fear
> Weighed her heart when he was near.

And this feeling and this manner had no reference to the prior claims either of Falconer on the one hand, or of Honoria on the other. If both had been out of the question, she could not have endured Sir Henry Percival's suit. And involuntarily she made him feel it.

And finally, piqued and numbed, he withdrew his love tones

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and love glances from the cold, ungrateful girl, and confined them where he knew they would be more welome. His conscience also pricked him somewhat in regard to Honoria He felt that it was not exactly the course of a man of honor to persevere month after month, for more than a year, in attentions to one woman, while his heart and his purposes were fixed upon another. For, poor fellow, with the usual blindness of victims upon such occasions, he never dreamed that it was *Miss Honoria* who courted *him* all this time.

And, added to the prompting of his conscience, which let us hope was the motive power of the greatest weight, there were these lesser influences: The family in Howlet Hollow, and the world outside, too, *expected* him to marry Miss Honoria; he had *led* them to expect it! had he now the moral courage to disappoint a reasonable expectation? and then, certainly, in a rational and worldly point of view, Honoria was quite as eligible as Maud. She was the co-heiress of her sister, and her money would be very useful in building up his own decayed fortunes—(not that Sir Henry was a mercenary fortune-hunter, for such was really not his character or purpose, only on this occasion he committed the not unusual introversion of lugging in his *interest* to encourage and support his *conscience* in the performance of a duty.) And then, as for external *prettiness*, Honoria, he thought, was certainly *prettier* than Maud; her skin was more snowy, and her features smaller and chiselled with a more classic regularity And then, again, her manner, perfected during her residence at foreign courts, was assuredly more high-bred, more aristocratic than that of Maud. In short, Sir Henry, like a wiser fox than he really was, depreciated the arbor grapes hung high above his head, and praised the flavor of the chicken berries in his reach.

Still he had not quite made up his mind how to act.

And in the meantime, Miss Honoria's heart, or rather her vanity, sickened with hope deferred; and well it might, poor girl! it was no joke to be daily expecting and longing for a proposal for nearly two years, until, "out of her grief and her impatience," she was almost driven to make it herself!



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An accident often decides the conduct of an undecided character. Such a chance precipitated the fate of Sir Henry Percival, at the very moment he imagined himself free. And this was the way of it: he had resolved to visit New England for a month or two, and he thought that during his absence, and before his departure to England, he would be able to determine upon some definite course of action. When he announced his intended journey to the family, they listened in polite indifference, wishing him a pleasant tour, and a speedy return, etc., all except Honoria. *She* heard in dismay, asking herself what *could* that man mean, and whether he would go away again without coming to an understanding with her? And in the time that intervened between the morning of his announcement and the day of his departure, he grew daily more troubled and anxious. She could have indulged herself with many a good, hearty cry, only she could not afford to redden her eyes and enlarge her nose—at least not while he stayed.

But the hour came in which he was to bid them all farewell. Daniel Hunter was to accompany him to the village.

He took leave of Mrs. Hunter and Maud in the library, and then sought the presence of Honoria, who had purposely isolated herself in the empty drawing-room, to afford him a last opportunity of declaring himself. If he could escape that parting hour, she thought then he certainly would be lost to her hopes for ever.

He *did* escape it, or rather he thought he did. He entered gaily, spoke to her smilingly, paid her some graceful, unmeaning compliment, kissed her hand, and bade her adieu.

There! he was gone, sure enough, without doing her justice, she said.

And, overwhelmed with disappointed ambition, mortified vanity, and even wounded affection—(for the frivolous girl rather liked the young man around whom so many hopes clustered)—she threw herself down upon the sofa in a passion of tears.

Some one entered hastily.

"I wonder what I did with my gloves. Good Heavens! Miss Hunter! Honoria! Dearest Honoria! What is the matter? I beg your pardon!—Honoria!"

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It was Sir Henry Percival—and he was bending over her, frightened, pleased, remorseful, flattered—all at once.

Now, of course, you know what followed.

Sir Henry Percival deferred his journey, and that forenoon, when he should have been on the road to Baltimore, he was closeted with Daniel Hunter, telling him that his happiness depended on the possession of Miss Honoria's fair hand. And Miss Honoria herself was in Mrs. Hunter's chamber, sitting on a sofa between Mrs. Hunter and Maud, with a hand clasped in the hand of each, and—(a heroine for once in her life)—being wept over, and smiled over by the maiden, who kissed her and caressed her, and wished her joy over and over again.

It was the next day after breakfast that Mrs. Hunter desired the presence of Miss Honoria in her own apartment for a private interview. And then and there the lady revealed to her adopted daughter the history of her true parentage, and placed her mother's letter in her hands.

Honoria heard the story with many tears—tears of false shame, vexation, and even remorse, when she remembered her cold, haughty manner to her poor, loving, unknown mother. But soon every other feeling was swallowed up in the fear of the effect the knowledge of this would have upon her affianced, and his intentions towards her. Mrs. Hunter reassured her.

"Have you seen any change in his manner either last evening or this morning?" inquired the lady.

"No, mamma; he is very good."

"Then be at ease—he is well informed of all that I have told you. During the interview in the library yesterday morning, Mr. Hunter put Sir Henry in possession of all the facts."

Miss Honoria was surprised and comforted. And she began to experience the conviction that there was no one she had yet met, who was as selfish as herself. It was a little glimmering of light and warmth let in upon her cold and darkened spirit; let us hope that it may shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, and that Mrs. Hunter's long continued efforts for her regeneration have not been all in vain—that the good seed sown

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long ago, and lying quiescent in that young heart, may germinate at last and bring forth good fruit.

Honoria retired to her own room to read her poor mother's first and last letter—that fond letter so full of yearning affection—to read and to shed tears of repentance over it.

The next day, by the earnest advice of Mrs. Hunter, Honoria wrote to her brother. And Mr. Hunter enclosed it in a letter of explanation from himself to Falconer, and for greater safety sent them to the State Department at Washington, to go off in the official mail-bag to Rome.

One month from this time, Sir Henry Percival and Miss Honoria were quietly married at the village church by the Reverend Mr. Lovel, and the same morning they set out on a journey to New York, whence they sailed to England.

And soon after their departure, Mr. Hunter and his family went again to Washington city for the winter.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### LOVE AND ART.

There is no light in earth or heaven,
But the cold light of stars;
And the first watch of night is given
To the red planet, Mars.

Within my breast there is no light,
But the cold light of stars;
give the first watch of the night,
To the red planet, Mars.—*Longfellow.*

FALCONER had been many months in Rome. At first, quite absorbed in the contemplation of the wonders of the "Eternal City," he did not speculate too curiously upon the singular fact that while in the receipt of a very liberal remuneration for implied services as private secretary of the American Chargé, his time was left entirely at his own disposal.

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And even if in the midst of his dilettanteism he suddenly recollected that he was doing absolutely nothing in return for the handsome salary he received, he would say to himself—that he supposed it must be all right—that certainly he was always at Major ——'s commands, who could avail himself of his presence whenever he pleased to do so.

And therefore Falconer continued as before, haunting the old churches and palaces, and dreaming away his life amid their wonderful collections of painting and sculpture.

And this interval of repose seemed really necessary for the soothing down of those turbulent and excitable emotions—the last subsiding throes of that mental storm which had so lately shaken his whole nature.

From the scene of his passionate love and bitter disappointment, of his burning hatred, fierce political war and humiliating defeat—he was now far separated by distance and time.

He was where he had so greatly longed to be—in the old city of the arts—surrounded by the awful monuments of a long-buried, glorious past. And great was the calm that slowly descended upon his spirit.

And now, free from the strife of evil passions, free to ponder over the entire past—involuntarily he commenced to question the wisdom and rectitude of his own conduct. In vain he sought to stifle or escape from these self-questionings; they recurred at unexpected times and places. And everywhere—under the shadowy arches of some ancient ruin, in the dim aisles of some gorgeous old church—even in his own chamber, in the watches of the night, whispered the still small voice, summoning up visions of those friends he had done his utmost to estrange and alienate for ever—visions of Maud, in her angelic loveliness; of Mrs. Hunter, in her noble, matronly beauty; of Daniel Hunter, with his majestic benignity of brow;—all—all so incompatible with that egotism, pride and ambition of which he had so bitterly charged them—of which he now began to suspect he had so rashly and falsely charged them. Still! Maud was going to be married to Sir Henry Percival! True—he himself—Falconer—had in anger



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broken away from her—had cast her plighted faith back in her face, had flung himself out of the neighborhood, and so had left her free to contract another engagement. Yet still—

In the midst of these self-questionings, self-reproaches, and self-justifications, his second quarter came to an end, and he was wakened up by having his second quarterly payment placed in his hands. The money almost seemed to scorch his palm.

"Oh! this will never do!" he said. "I do not understand this at all. I cannot continue to receive a salary for nothing." And he hastened to the presence of his employer, and told him as much.

"Well, my dear young friend," said the Major, laying down his newspaper, "what is to be done? We cannot help it—*I* am also receiving a salary for living here in idleness. *My* office is just at present a perfect sinecure—there is positively nothing doing at the Legation. But shall I, upon that account, throw it up? Nonsense. Be easy, my young friend, lest in a few days or weeks you should have to complain of *too much* business." And the old gentleman resumed his paper, while Falconer, with a relieved conscience, retired. And from that day, for many weeks he gave himself up, heart and soul, to the study of his art.

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"Important news from the United States, to-day," said Major ——, entering the library, and throwing down a number of papers upon the table. "Mr. Hunter has introduced a bill in the House of Representatives, which, if passed, will be sure to restore internal peace to our distracted country. Read, Mr. O'Leary! read! God knows I think that man is the greatest statesman of the age, as well as the only hope of his own country. Read, sir! read!" he concluded, throwing a paper to Falconer, with a triumphant air, and then settling himself down to the perusal of another one.

Falconer, in no very sweet temper, took up the paper. Daniel Hunter before the House of Represenatives, was a monument of his own (Falconer's) signal defeat. The paper was the organ of the then administration. Falconer looked at the first page, and read:

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"Debate in the House of Representatives." "HUNTER'S BILL." "Mr. Hunter, though suffering from recent illness, appeared in his seat this morning," &c., &c.

Then followed the introduction of the celebrated bill, and the debate upon it.

Falconer's astonishment was irrepressible, and found vent in exclamations:

"This is really a noble, a most noble measure; a grand, masterly stroke of policy."

"Yes, is it not?" exclaimed the major, enthusiastically bringing down his fist upon the table. "Is it not great? is it not god-like? That man is a Titan in state policy!"

"But I am astonished, not only at the *bill*, but at the *man* who brought it in!"

"Why?" asked the Major, in perplexity.

"Why, that *Daniel Hunter* should have proposed such a measure."

"I am never the least surprised by anything great and noble that originates with Daniel Hunter."

"But the fact is, that I could not have believed this of Mr. Hunter, without knowing it! I had expected a different and *opposite* course of policy from him."

The Major stared in the utmost amazement.

"Why, what do you mean? a different and *opposite* course of policy! what the d—l! did *you* expect Daniel Hunter to abjure his life-long political principles?"

"Nay, sir," said the young man, coloring; "I fear—I mean I *hope* that I may have been—that I may have judged rashly."

"Pray, my young friend, did you know much of Mr. Hunter's course when he was last in Congress?"

"N-n-o, sir! I was a mere lad then."

"And since that, until now, he has been abroad, where you could know nothing certainly of him. I fear, young man, that your judgment has been warped by prejudice."

"God grant that it may prove to have been so, sir!" said Falconer.

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"*There!* read that speech! Read that speech in support of his bill! That will let you completely into the secret of his political principles, which is a secret, I hope, to few besides yourself," said the old gentleman, tossing him the other paper.

The young man took it, and attentively perused the speech; it was an exposition so clear, an argument so powerful, so conclusive, that the reader felt some of his strongest opinions yielding, and when he had finished it he sat for a long time buried in thought.

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Soon after this, came the end of the third quarter, and Falconer was, for the third time, brought face to face with the salary he had not earned. And upon this occasion he absolutely refused to touch it. And to the Major's remonstrances he further replied, that unless in the current quarter he could make himself of some service, he should beg leave, at the end of it, to retire from his situation. And the young man said this with a firmness of purpose that Major —— could not hope to shake.

And, therefore, by the next home mail, the Major wrote to his friend, Daniel Hunter, that his young protegé was growing very unmanageably conscientious upon the subject of his salary, and that he would certainly leave him at the close of the current quarter. And Major —— requested permission to avert this event, by making known to the young gentleman the name and the intentions of his patron. In those days, before steamships were dreamed of, the foreign mail was a much slower affair, requiring much more time and patience than now. And Major —— scarcely hoped to get a reply to his letter in time to prevent the young man from throwing up his situation.

In the meantime, by the next month's mail, they received a great parcel of despatches, newspapers and letters from the United States. Major ——, in his eagerness for political information, tore open the newspaper parcels first; nor was he disappointed.

"Great news! glorious news from Washington!" he exclaimed; "Daniel Hunter's bill passed both Houses of Congress! the

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country overjoyed! the whole nation singing pæans! Bonfires! illuminations! torch-light processions! and all sorts of glorifications from Maine to Louisiana, and from Florida to Oregon! Read! read, sir! Read! read!" thrusting the paper into Falconer's hand, and getting up and walking the floor, in a state of the most glorious exhilaration.

And Falconer *did* read.

And what a revelation of the true patriot in all he read! And yet! it is impossible that a deeply-rooted prejudice should be easily displaced! Oh, how he debated with himself night and day! Oh, how his surly demon tore him before it would come out of him! For he might have been unjustly prejudiced against the *statesman*, and Daniel Hunter might really be the best as well as the greatest man alive; but had not the *father* been cruel and treacherous? had he not, even while making a show of moderation and justice and candor, taken his daughter from her betrothed lover, and was he not going to marry her to an English baronet? There was no softening down *that* circumstance to Falconer's satisfaction.

Meanwhile the months rolled around, and brought Mr. Hunter's answer to the Major's letter concerning Falconer's situation. Daniel Hunter wrote that the young man's scruples were just and honorable to him; that he was glad to find he entertained and was governed by them. He requested his friend, Major ——, to offer no farther opposition to Falconer's purpose of leaving his present position; but, on the contrary, to encourage him to devote himself exclusively to his art. And he said that he himself would take care that the young sculptor should receive orders for work enough to keep him busily engaged. And enclosed in the same letter, to begin with, was a very liberal order from a retired merchant, a lover and patron of art, and a friend of Daniel Hunter, who had once before, at the suggestion of the latter, employed the young sculptor while at Washington.

In something less than a week from the receipt of this letter, of which Falconer knew nothing, the last quarter expired, and

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the young secretary came, according to his word, to resign his situation. And then it was, that, without mentioning Daniel Hunter's friendly agency in the matter, Major —— placed in the hands of the young artist, the letter of his wealthy patron, containing an order for a pair of full-sized companion busts, namely,—a copy in marble of the head of the Apollo Belvidere, and one of the Venus de Medicis. And Falconer, frank and impulsive in all things, joyfully expressed his surprise and his pleasure.

And now, with a mind relieved of care and inspired by hope, the young artist went diligently to work. And as the year rolled on, more orders, chiefly from the United States, poured in upon him.

And he might have been happy, but for the thought of Maud—that was the gnawing "worm i' the bud" of his peace. He watched the papers in an almost agonizing dread, to see the announcement of her marriage—the sentence of his own despair. He found it not. But what he *did* find, was the continued report of Daniel Hunter's public career—his proceedings in Congress, his resolutions, his speeches, all revealing that Christian principle governing political action; that clear-sighted, far-reaching wisdom, that pure and high-souled patriotism, which, despite all the strength of the boy's stubborn prejudices, constrained his admiration and esteem. He struggled stoutly against this influence, but in vain, for everything he heard or read of Daniel Hunter disabused him of a prejudice, and gave him new cause for esteem. And at last he ceased to resist the strong attraction that was drawing his heart towards the noblest man of his age. Sometimes, even in the presence of the Major, Falconer, with his frank impetuosity, would break out into some exclamation of surprise at his own blindness, and high admiration of Mr. Hunter's course—a eulogium in which the Major would cordially join.

And oh! if any circumstance could have deepened his distress at the loss of Maud, it would have been this growing esteem for her father. Alas! Maud. She pervaded his whole being, she

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influenced all his actions! Haunted and inspired by her beautiful face, he threw the glory of that beauty over all his works—why even his model of the head of the Venus was not a faithful copy—for it had Maud's angel brows. And when an order from the United States, from an anonymous patron, was transmitted to him through Major ——, for an original group of statuary, the subject of which was to be Virginius—the young sculptor seized the idea, went to work with all the enthusiasm and devotion of his nature, and gave to the female figure the form and features of his Maud. While the work was in plaster the Major came to see it. It was a grand and beautiful conception, but not faultless, of course—it was injured, as works of art often are, by the artist's own peculiar mood. Thus, not upon the principal, but upon the subordinate figure, was thrown the whole power of his genius—for instance, his Virginius was well enough—a fine, stalwart Roman centurion enough, with a decent look of pain and firmness on his face, as he held his daughter over his left arm, and raised the dagger with his right hand. But the female figure—his Virginia—that indeed was a triumph and a wonder of art. She lay over her father's arm, with her beautiful face upturned to his in holy trust, to meet the descending blow—not unconscious, not defying, nor invoking the death, but simply and beautifully accepting it—accepting it as from her father's hand—accepting it in perfect love and trust.

"Yes," said the Major, looking at the group with the air of a critic. "Yes—this is very good—very good indeed—only—are you *true* to your subject? are you true to history? According to the Roman story, Virginius was the great object of admiration, and for all that we know, Virginia was a mere, pretty, innocent school girl, quite ignorant of her impending fate, until the moment the sacrificial steel was plunged in her bosom. Now it appears to me that you have slighted the tragic position of the father, while you have exaggerated that of the daughter. Am I not right?"

"Major ——, will it please you to take the chisel and finish the group to your mind, or allow me to do it to mine?"

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"Pooh, pooh! you irritable fellow! do you fancy that sculptors are like kings, and must never hear the truth spoken. Your Virginia is an exquisitely beautiful creation—or rather *copy*—for it is a copy!"

"A *copy* sir, sir!"

"Yes! don't fire up! A copy of Miss Hunter—as perfect a likeness as I ever saw. I should have recognized it in Africa or Otaheite—and how naturally that look of filial love and faith sits upon her beautiful face! But while you were at it, why did not you carry out the idea, and give to this brawny, ferocious looking Roman centurion, something of the majestic firmness and serenity of Daniel Hunter's form and face—it would then have been a family piece."

Falconer turned away in displeasure, leaving the Major standing before the group, still examining and criticising the work.

"By the way, talking of Mr. Hunter, I see by the last mail's papers, that there has been a marriage in his family," said the Major, carelessly.

"A MARRIAGE!" this exclamation escaped the poor boy quite involuntarily—he felt as if he had been shot through the heart—he turned very pale, and leaned upon the Niobe for support. Ah! he had expected it! it did not take him by surprise—at least not much! not much! So he said to himself. And he leaned heavily upon the Niobe, and struggled to meet the blow with dignity.

He succeeded.

While the Major was still squinting through his eye-glass, and anatomically criticising the muscles and tendons of Virginius' right leg, the youth lifted up his head and said—he felt obliged to say something—

"It has been long contemplated, I believe."

"Well—yes—*rather* a long courtship, I fancy—but—however!"

"Sir Henry Percival and —— are the happy pair, I presume?"

"Oh, *of course*. Why, what do you mean, when we are talking of a long engagement? Here is the paper, if you would like

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to look at it. I am going. Good afternoon, my dear boy; throw a little more *soul* into your Virginius, and that group will make you famous."

And the critic departed, leaving as black a shadow behind him as a critic possibly could. Yet not upon the artist's *work!* Alas! in this bitter hour, what cared the boy for his fame? In this bitter hour, when he felt that she who gave all the value to it, was gone for ever, was worse than dead to him—worse than dead; for oh! with how much less of agony could he have heard of her death! with what comparative content and satisfaction, could he have heard of her death! *with what joy should he now hear of it*—if only some merciful illness or accident would carry her off, out of the arms of his rival. Oh, God! the thought maddened him! anything, anything, but that she should live the wife of another! He had not known till now, how strong had been his hopes of sometime possessing her; till now, when all hope was lost in despair. And how black and terrible that despair. Now, that he was alone, it overwhelmed him; he fell crushed by it, and yielded up his manhood to an agony of grief that I shall not wrong him by describing.

His own, his gentle love, who had lived with him and loved him all her life; who, tired or ailing, had sat upon his lap with her head upon his bosom, and let him rock her to rest by their cottage fire, how many hundred times! That was a memory that melted his whole heart and soul with tenderness; he felt again her soft form pressed to his bosom—her light breath stealing past his cheeks—her rosy, half-open lips so near his own, in those hours when, with something like a mother's tenderness, he would not even kiss them, lest he should disturb her sweet sleep.

And now that she should be domesticated with another—! He could not pursue that thought! Ten thousand scorpions, no! they stung his soul to very frenzy! His heart burned and boiled like a crater: his veins ran lava. Oh, that she were dead! dead!

Some hopeful poet has said that the darkest hour is just before the dawn. It was so certainly in our boy's case; for surely never



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before had he grovelled and agonized in such a black night of despair; and never before was he so near the dawn of—rapture!

It came to pass that he walked up and down his studio floor about five hundred times or more, with the savage unrest of a tiger, before the grim fancy of reading the marriage announcement seized him. Then, with the same sort of ghastly, shuddering interest with which some wretched victim of the inquisition might examine the instruments of his own torture—he took up the paper and read: "At St. John's Church, on the 15th of October, by the Reverend Mr. Lovel, Sir Henry Percival, Baronet, of Percival Park, Shropshire, England, to Miss Honoria—"

Down dropped the paper, and up sprang the reader! Clapping both his hands to his head, he stood like one lost in amazement. "It must be that I am going mad," he murmured. "Yes, my very senses are no longer to be trusted." He snatched the paper up, and read the notice again, murmuring the words "Um, um, um, Shropshire, England, to Miss Honoria—" He could get no farther than *this* name; it transfixed his eyes; he gazed at it as if he would gaze it through the paper. Suddenly he started, seized his cap, and taking the paper with him, hurried as fast as his limbs could carry him to the American Legation. He entered, and hastened at once to the library, where he found Major ——, reading. The old gentleman turned round in surprise, to see the flushed and unceremonious intruder. But when he recognized his favorite, he arose and held out his hand, smilingly, to welcome him. Falconer struggled to control himself, as he held out the paper to his friend, and pointing to the marriage announcement—

"Is there not some mistake here, sir?"

"'Mistake,'" said the major, taking the journal and reading over the notice; "*no*, I see no mistake. What do you mean?"

The boy's heart throbbed so, he could scarcely speak. He faultered out,

"I—I—thought that Sir Henry Percival was to be married to—to—Maud—to Miss Hunter—"

"*What?* to Maud Hunter!" exclaimed the major, gathering his brows in perplexity.

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"Yes. Did not *you*—did not everybody think so?"

"Why, *no*, I never thought so. But sit down, my dear fellow, sit down; you look like an epileptic! sit down. So—so, that's it, is it?" said the old gentleman, rubbing his forehead with his forefinger.

"But, Major," said the young man, sinking into the nearest chair; "tell me; you were with the Hunters two years ago, in Washington, now did you not *know* that this Englishman was paying his addresses to Miss Hunter?"

"Whom, *Maud?*"

"Certainly, sir."

"No, I really did not."

"But, surely you *must* have heard the report of their engagement. It was everywhere current and believed."

"Oh-h-h—ye-es. I heard such a silly rumor, but I also heard it contradicted by herself and her friends."

"'Contradicted by herself and her friends!'"

"Why, cer-tain-ly—"

"'Contradicted by herself and her friends!'"

"*Of course.* What ails you? Why do you look so amazed?"

He was not amazed. He had been; but now amazement was lost in joy. Joy unspeakable was tiding in upon his heart, and oppressing it almost to tears. It was not his Maud, then! Oh! it was not his own beautiful, tender, loving darling that had left him, and nestled to the bosom of this detested rival! Not Maud, but Honoria, who had married this proud Englishman.

"Well! Why *don't* you speak to me? Are you an ecstatic?"

"I—I thought that *she*—Miss Hunter, I mean—had been engaged," faltered the boy.

"Well! so she *is* engaged. I have the sweet girl's own words for that," said the old gentleman, maliciously.

Falconer started, and clutched the edge of the table for support. Oh! he knew now! he remembered! she had told him the same thing! The very last moment he had seen her she had told him she was engaged! And it was but a change of persons after all! She was lost to him all the same! The room seemed

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turning round with him—he was losing his senses fast. Unconsciously he groaned forth,

"To whom, to whom, good heaven! to whom is she betrothed? Yet why do I ask? It does not matter!"

It was really cruel to rack the poor fellow with so many contrary excitements. The Major felt it to be so, and hastened to relieve him.

"To whom? Why to the young friend of her childhood and youth—a mad-cap boy—whom I do not think half good enough for her, but whom the sweet maiden loves better than all the rest of the world, it seems."

Like lightning flashed the truth upon his mind now! It was to *himself* that she had alluded when she had said she was engaged! His Maud—his idol—his darling, was true—true to the heart's core—true as the angels! Oh, heaven of bliss! Oh, joy insupportable, and full of tears! He grew pale and paler, with excess of emotion, as he listened, bending forward, and grasping the hands of the speaker, who continued,

"Yes, my dear boy, and her father afterwards endorsed her words, by what he told me. Some short time before our departure for this place, Mr. Hunter took occasion to inform me, as his confidential friend, that his daughter, Maud, was conditionally affianced to a very talented and promising young gentleman, to whom she was much attached, a friend and protegé of his own, whom he already regarded as a son, and wished to send abroad, and commended to my guardianship and good offices."

The boy suddenly dropped the hands of the old man, fell back in his chair, covered his face with his open palms, and burst into tears! For some moments he did not utter a syllable, and then he broke silence in choking self-reproaches.

"Oh! ingrate! fool! beast that I have been! Was there ever such a beast?"

"If you addressed that question to me, I really cannot flatter you by slandering the brute creation. *No*, there never *was* such a beast! All the beasts I ever heard of, knew friends from foes, and loved the former."

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"Good heaven! What resource is left me now?"

"Why, *this*, of course: As it was by your own will you transformed yourself into an ass's colt, and then found you did no credit to that species—why you can even transfigure yourself back again to a man and a gentleman, and be reasonable and polite," said the Major, chuckling.

"Oh, sir! don't jest with me! This is too serious—much too serious. If you have any friendship for me, in mercy tell me how I am to make peace with this high-souled man—the father of my Maud?"

"Be at peace with yourself, my young friend. Daniel Hunter is not at war with you."

"Ah! no—not at war, perhaps—but offended, outraged, estranged for ever."

"Why should you think so?"

"Why? Ah, why? He has had cause enough, heaven knows! He wished me well—he tried to do me good—but I, like a fool or a madman, suspected his motives, spurned his kindness, insulted him to his face, and abused him behind his back! *Beast!* that I was! I could thump my own head against the wall!"

"Nay, nay, now don't assault yourself at that rate. Mr. Hunter knows that it was all under a misapprehension of his character, and his moderation, patience and faith, pass all your conception of such qualities. You said, my young friend, that he *tried* to do you good—now, did you ever know Daniel Hunter to *try* to do anything that he did not accomplish? and do you really suppose that you baulked him in his endeavor? No! he *has* done you good, *still* does you good, and will *continue* to do you good. Under God, he has been the providence of your life; watching over your interests with paternal care; promoting your welfare with all his power; yet forbearing to intrude upon your gratitude; withdrawing himself into the background; bearing your bitter prejudice with matchless patience; waiting for the time when you should know him as he is, with unclouded faith?"

For all answer, Falconer could only start up and walk about the floor, and hurry back, and throw himself into the chair, exclaiming,



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"Oh, God! Why did I not know all this!"

"One would have thought you might have wondered at your remarkable success, and sought the cause of it in some powerful friend. But, 'tis true! you heaven-born, star-gazing, inspired children of genius are, in one respect, very like the poor, stupid, grovelling pigs—you devour the acorns as they fall, without ever looking to see where they come from. Even in your green, crude youth, you accept any amount of favor and homage, without the least surprise, as the natural dues of your genius. You are astonished at nothing but disappointment, which makes you indignant, and you wonder at nothing but opposition, which you term martyrdom."

"Oh, go on, sir! go on! For heaven's sake don't stop, for when you do, my conscience takes up the burden of the song, and reproaches me more bitterly than you can. A precious duet you sing between you. But my heart, while you are silent, says the bitterest things; so, for God's sake, don't stop!"

"I don't intend to. I am going to ask you now, *did* you never wonder at your singular good fortune? Why, only consider—look back upon your life for the last three years. There were you, an almost friendless and quite unknown young aspirant of art. I say almost friendless, for surely you never considered the radical mobs that ran after you, and cheered your stump speeches, *friends*—at least you have not proved them such. Well! you, a friendless and unknown young student, obtained ready admittance into the very best studio, as a pupil of the very greatest master in America. And patronage gathered around you with the greatest possible encouragement, giving more orders than you could possibly execute. Was there ever such good luck heard of in all the annals of art? Or was it an every-day affair, think you, for a youthful artist to receive such encouragement as that? But, oh! doubtless, you ascribed it all to the transcendant power of your own genius, and instead of being grateful, grew vain-glorious."

"Don't pause, sir. Take a long breath and begin again—do!"

"I intend to. Well, the next summer, in the high-tide of

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your success, a political devil took possession of you, and down went chisel and marble, and off you rushed on a radical, wild-goose chase, mob-oratoring all over the country—leaving the studio, a score of unfinished works, your old master, and a half-a-dozen patrons in the lurch—an unpardonable proceeding towards *them*, to say nothing of your flying all over the state, making mad, incendiary speeches, misunderstanding, maligning and misrepresenting the greatest man, the purest patriot, and the best friend you ever found in this world."

"Oh, sir, why do you cease? Do you expect me to say one word in my own defence? Sir, I have not one word to say! Proceed—do not spare me!"

"I don't mean to. Well, after your defeat, when disappointed, dejected, despairing, you were lurking about the Summit, you were sought for, and invited—nay, entreated, to return to your old place in Donzoni's studio. I wonder you never thought *that* strange. But I'll warrant you set it all down to the credit of your own invaluable worth, and gave yourself airs accordingly. Didn't you, my fine fellow? Come, now! tell the truth—didn't you?"

"Oh, sir, you really should take a doctor's degree in the art of reproaching!" exclaimed Falconer, bitterly, starting up and walking about the floor. Suddenly he returned and flung himself into his chair, saying, "Go on, sir! go on, sir! Why do you stop? Begin again—*do!*"

"I'm going to. I haven't half done yet!—Don't be afraid. Well, when fairly re-installed in your studio, you found steady work irksome after such a life of excitement as you had lately led, and you wished to travel—to visit Rome, and study the works of the old masters. You expressed that wish, and lo! a way was immediately and wonderfully opened for you to gratify your laudable desire. You *have* travelled,—you *are* at Rome. You *do* study the old masters. And patronage, encouragement, and favor is tiding around you in the most unprecedented manner. Does *this* not strike you as astonishing, as something to be accounted for out of the ordinary way? Now, in the name of Heaven, my young friend, did you never see or hear of the wearisome, de-

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pressing, discouraging trials of youthful genius,—and do you never wonder at your own blessed exemption from them? And in the name of reason, judgment and common sense, did it never occur to you, that under Divine Providence, there was some unseen, unknown, beneficent influence, smoothing your path, guiding your steps, ordering your destiny? Whether such a natural question ever arose in your mind or not, there has been and *is* such a friendly power continually, affectionately, earnestly exerted in your favor. And that power is—"

"Daniel Hunter's! The man whom I have misunderstood, hated and slandered! Just Heaven!"

"Exactly; how do you feel now, my boy? Eh? How do you feel?"

"I feel, sir, among other feelings, that it was to *Mr. Hunter's* friendship and influence, and not to *my own* merits or *your* good opinion, that I owed the appointment to the situation of your private secretary."

"The situation of my private secretary! Ha, ha, ha! That's good! That's exceedingly good!" laughed the old gentleman, chuckling, and shaking his head, and rubbing his knees.

"I don't understand you, Major ——."

"*Don't you?* That's surprising! Why, Falconer, you see how little there is to do here. I have a secretary of legation appointed by government, and whose office, as well as my own, is almost a sinecure, and bless you, I have no more need of a private secretary than I have of a third leg, even supposing I were able to pay one from my own very moderate salary! Ha, ha, ha!"

"In the name of heaven, Major, what do you mean *now?*"

"Why the Lord bless you, my excellent young friend, you were not my secretary, but my *ward;* I was not your employer, but your *trustee;* and the sums advanced to you were not instalments of your salary, but your *income*, settled upon you by—"

"Oh, sir! speak out! Fill up the measure of my degradation! Say by the very man whom I have outraged and abused! say by Daniel Hunter!"

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"By your *father-in-law*, Falconer! By your father-in-law, who loves his wild, but honest-hearted boy, in spite of all his bitter prejudices, and who has been constantly and affectionately studying and laboring for his welfare! Is there anything degrading in owing an obligation to *him?*"

"Oh! my God! this is too much! too much! This is really heaping coals of fire on my head!" exclaimed the young man, starting up and pacing the floor with rapid strides.

"Let them melt, not burn you, Falconer! Come, come, my young friend, be calm. I have spoken some plain truths to you rather bluntly. Daniel Hunter would not easily pardon his old crony, if he knew how roughly he had blurted out this story to his son! But *you* will forgive me, I know. Come! shake hands, and let's close this exciting interview!"

"Not yet, sir!" exclaimed Falconer, returning and casting himself into a chair. "There is one thing with which I have to charge you—injustice and unkindness in suffering me to remain in ignorance of all this for two years past! Why have you done so?"

"For many imperative reasons, Mr. O'Leary; a few of which will answer your question. In the first place, it was really no part of my duty to inform you. In the second place, had you known to whom you were indebted for your prosperity, acrimoniously embittered as you *then* were against the man, you would have hurled his proffered assistance back in his face, and flung yourself off to ruin, rather than have owed success to Daniel Hunter! To disabuse you of your false and acrid prejudice was impossible; because, Mr. O'Leary, you are a young gentleman who will *not* be taught by anything but your own experience, if by that; therefore by the slow process of experience had you to learn the inestimable worth of Daniel Hunter. And you had to follow closely and critically his course through the last two years of his very trying public life, before you could understand and appreciate his character, principles and motives of action. Gradually your mind has been enlightened, and you have been prepared to receive the communication I have made you. Now you have the whole truth."

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Falconer sat with his face buried in his hands, a prey to the fiercest and most antagonistic emotions,—joy, sorrow, love, remorse, exultation, all striving for the mastery in his bosom. The predominant feeling was, perhaps, an intense longing, a wild desire, an almost irresistible impulse to fly directly to Maud, and cast himself at her feet. But that could not be, he knew. There was silence and a pause, broken at last by Falconer, who arose and held out his hand to his old friend. The Major took it, and pressing it kindly, said,

"Go now and take a stroll in the open air among the old ruins, my boy. It is just the thing that will soothe and calm that terribly agitated heart of yours."

Go and take a quiet stroll in the open air, among the old ruins!—and with his heart and brain bursting to pour forth its torrent of thought and emotion! Oh! the man who advised *that* was sixty-five years old, and had forgotten his youth! thought Falconer, as he rushed home to his lodgings, to write to—Mr. Hunter, Maud, both, everybody.

But to Maud first—and such a letter!—eighteen pages full of remorse, self-reproach, explanations, justifications, prayers, vows, love, admiration, devotion, worship, etc., etc., etc., *ad infinitum*. It came to an end at last (as this history may, reader, if you will have patience).

And then to her father! This was a far more difficult task, though he wrote a shorter letter. He filled and destroyed many sheets of paper, before his heart was sufficiently calm, his head sufficiently clear, to feel and know precisely what he wished, and what he ought to write. At length he finished a letter, truthful, manly, dignified—full of noble candor and generous acknowledgments—worthy himself to offer and Mr. Hunter to receive. In this he enclosed Maud's letter, and despatched them by the first home mail.

But then, oh! when he remembered that months must elapse before he could possibly receive an answer, he felt an almost ungovernable impulse to throw himself on board the very first homeward bound vessel and return to the United States to seek

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the presence of his Maud and her father. But he recollected that rashness, impatience, impetuosity, had been the besetting sins and foundering rocks of his life, and he determined to govern them. He resolved to stay in Rome, to devote himself to his art, and prove himself worthy of Mr. Hunter's esteem and Maud's affection. First of all he went to work, and patiently remodelled his Virginius, retaining all the peculiarly sweet and holy beauty of the female figure, and investing the form and face of the Roman father with an almost God-like glory, which it had not worn before. No one could now justly complain that the principal figure of the group was slighted. He worked away with the greatest enthusiasm, for well he guessed who was to be the "anonymous" purchaser—anonymous now no longer.

In the midst of his labors, he was one morning interrupted by the Major, who entered, smiling, and holding in his hand two letters, that had arrived among the dispatches from the United States, received the evening before.

"One of these," said he, "is from Mr. Hunter, and appears, by the date of the post-mark, to have been delayed upon its way," and handed them to the young man, and bidding him good day, left him to their perusal. Falconer tore open Daniel Hunter's letter, and out of it dropped another, superscribed in a lady's hand—not Maud's! oh! that he saw immediately in one eager glance. It was, in fact, the letter that had been written by Honoria, at the suggestion of Mrs. Hunter, a short time previous to the marriage of the former.

Mr. Hunter's letter was a friendly, business-like communication, giving a concise history of his adoption of Honoria, and introducing to her brother that young lady's letter, which was a tolerably affectionate and sisterly affair, expressing her desire to become better acquainted with him, informing him of her approaching marriage, and inviting him in her own and her husband's name, to come and visit them at Christmas, by which time they would be settled in their home in Shropshire.

We will not pause to describe the astonishment of Falconer, on finding that the little golden-haired sister of his infancy, whom

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he had always supposed had died in her babyhood of the pestilence in that ghastly hospital—had really been rescued and adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, and educated as their daughter and heiress. It was but another bond to bind his heart to them. This threw light also upon much that had seemed inexplicable in his poor mother's manner during the last years of her life. He fell into a deep reverie over the past—facts recurred to his memory, and linked themselves together in a chain of evidence that made him wonder at his own thoughtlessness, never having suspected the truth before—the identity of the names—"Honoria"—the identity of the features and complexion; the likeness of the child, still preserved in the maiden; the strong likeness of both to the mother; the tender interest constantly betrayed by that poor mother; he lingered so long over these reminiscences, that he totally forgot there was another unopened letter awaiting his perusal—until his eye chanced to fall upon it. Then he roused himself from his brown study, and took up the letter. It bore an official stamp. He opened it with leisurely indifference. But imagine the surprise, delight and pride of the young sculptor, when he found it to be the proffer of a government contract to execute a statue for a niche in the Capitol at Washington. Ah! well he knew to whose friendship and influence he owed this choice honor! Would he not toil to justify it! If his energies had been inclined to flag, they would now have received a new impetus.

From this time forth he worked with new zeal.

In due course of time he received the answers to his letter to Mr. Hunter and Maud. The reply of the former was in the greatest degree cordial, encouraging and inspiring—scarcely alluding to the past, but speaking hopefully, confidently of the future. The letter of his Maud was like herself, tender, cheerful, and affectionate. Falconer read them both many times over, pressed them both again and again to his heart.

There is little to relate of the life of patient industry led by Falconer for the next two years—however rich such a life may be in *self*-conquest, it is not marked by adventure or incident. On the contrary, it had its seasons of dullness, sterility and de-

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pression—of languor of body and mind, inducing self-doubt, discouragement, and consequent failure. Such seasons as come in the lives of us all, when we are tempted to think it a settled darkness, when it is only a passing cloud. And then his old imp of rashness would inspire him to throw up his work and fly to the United States—to the presence of his Maud—to see her, at any event, let what else would fail. At such moments the recollection of the millions of waves beyond waves of ocean that rolled between them would almost drive him to desperation. At such moments nothing less swift than "the wings of the wind," or of "love," or of "thought," would have served his purpose—and a ship? pshaw! And yet he controlled this swelling, fiery impatience, and settled again to his labors, perseveringly studying his subject, designing, and drawing, and doubting and destroying, and beginning again, until he was satisfied with his sketch. And then moulding, and forming, and adding, and taking away, and getting disgusted, and lumping the clay together, and commencing over again, until he had got a model to his mind; and then cutting, and chipping, and scraping, and rasping, until slowly, slowly, slowly and painfully, from the formless block of marble emerged the statue.

His toil was cheered by letters from Maud. They never failed him. There never came a United States mail that was not charged with one or more of her sweet and treasured letters.

His Virginius was completed, perfected, and pronounced by the connoisseurs who came to see it, a master-piece. It was shipped off to the United States for exhibition, previous to passing into the possession of its purchaser.

Every mail brought the young sculptor encouraging accounts of its success—the press noticed it favorably—not omitting to inform the public that the same artist was then employed upon a statue for the Capitol at Washington. All this was highly gratifying to the *artist*, but dearer, far dearer to the lover was a letter he received from his Maud—full of *her* admiration of his work—her guileless, indiscriminating, all-accepting, all-believing faith in him and his genius.



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Ah! passing sweet were these first rewards of his labor. I doubt that if in his rising, glorious "noon of fame," any adulation ever was so sweet! And no longer subject to lapses into despondency, he went to work zealously, hopefully, perseveringly upon his statue for the Capitol.

And Maud continued to cheer him with her frequent letters. Those letters! they were faithful transcripts of the maiden's beautiful daily life in the country—her pleasing toil in assisting her father and mother in the designs and labors for the improvement of their neighborhood—her infant Sunday-school—her old pensioners among the poor mountain people, or the superannuated old negroes—her rides and her drives—her garden and her pets. And then her life in the city; her appreciating admiration of every form of genius or beauty; her joy over an inspired preacher, a gifted musician, a great actor, or a great orator; her enthusiasm that threw its own glory and splendor over every scene of interest into which she was carried.

And thus passed the two years that it took to complete the statue for the Capitol. It was pronounced by all who saw it to be even far superior to his Virginius. And full of hope and joy, Falconer shipped it, and embarked himself in the same vessel, to return to the United States.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

### "THE LAST OF EARTH."

What is death, father? The rest, my child,
When the toil and the strife are o'er,
And the Angel of God, who, calm and mild,
Says we need fight no more;
Who driveth away the demon hand,
Bids the din of the battle cease;
Takes banner and spear from the failing hand,
And proclaims an eternal peace.—*Anonymous.*

WHEN Falconer landed at the port of New York, and sought out the hotel where he settled himself for the night, his next thought was to ring for the daily papers, which he turned over and examined with a keenness of interest only to be felt by a just returned absentee. He glanced over the city news, local items, devoured a letter from Washington, and the debates in Congress, in the hope and expectation of hearing recent news of Daniel Hunter—skimmed over the marriages and deaths, and turned to the "last news by the mails." When:

Good Heavens! what does he see? Oh! a common place thing enough—an every day, an every hour occurrence—but to *him*, fraught with the deepest sorrow. It was an obscure paragraph, that might be found only by those who expected to see it and anxiously looked for it: it "argued," too, "a foregone conclusion." It was this:

"We deeply regret to announce that the illness of Mr. Hunter has assumed a fatal aspect. Since Friday morning, he has continued insensible, and his physicians give no hopes of his recovery."

I hope there are very few in this world who can understand and sympathize by *experience* with our poor boy's feelings on reading that announcement.

It came upon him, such a shock! he could not understand it; he could not fully believe it! Oh! it was *too* grievous, too improbable, too *unnecessary* to be true!

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*Why* should he die? *he* so essential to his family, to his neighborhood, to his country? Could not that god-like INTELLECT have kept soul and body together? *Indeed, indeed* it seemed to the half-crazed boy that it *ought* to have done so! Oh, *why* should *he*, so great, so glorious, so powerful, so beneficent—*why* should *he* fall to dissolution, while so many feeble, miserable wretches, half alive, useless, or worse than useless, should be suffered to crawl on their course to old age. That that magnificent mind should pass away and be known no more on earth; that that magnificent frame should crumble into dust! To the boy's murmuring, rebellious spirit, it seemed unjust, impossible, terrific! he realized DEATH—death as the one great, incomprehensible, irremediable evil! death as the one greatest woe in the world—death as the veritable King of Terrors.

Oh! could *nothing* have saved him? Could nothing? medicine is a great art—was there nothing in *that*—no forgotten obscure power in *that*, that might have been remembered and called forth to save him? Could not the adoring love of his family, the esteem and affection of his neighborhood, the high respect, the honor of his country, save him?

No, no! a court, an army, a legion of angels, could not have saved him when the behest of the Highest summoned him away. He must go in the glorious prime of manhood, in the climax of his power and usefulness—must go and leave his great work unfinished! Oh! mysterious providence! Oh! inscrutable mystery of death and the grave!

And then his sorrow and remorse, and bitter, *bitter* disappointment! that was most severe, most insufferable of all. For Falconer was not one to love or hate, revenge, or repent in moderation. And since the scales had fallen from his moral vision, and he had seen and understood, appreciated and admired Daniel Hunter as he really was, his whole heart had been revolutionized, his whole nature had set towards Daniel Hunter with an ardent, remorseful, passionate desire! for his presence, for his affection, and more than all, for his approbation. At any time the boy could have embraced him; could have pressed him to his heart;

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could have thrown himself at his feet in penitent, passionate acknowledgment. And now his dearest purpose had been to hasten to him as to an injured father; to make the most thorough and satisfactory renunciation of his former misconceptions and errors, and then to cast himself upon the certain love of that noble, that magnanimous heart. Yes! he had intended to go to Daniel Hunter, and accuse and abuse himself to his own heart's content; for nothing else could satisfy the demands of his feelings!

True, much of all this had been written in letters to him, but what can a pen do in such a case? Could it demonstrate the power of a feeling that it required a lifetime to live out? And he had been hurrying home so eagerly, so joyously for this purpose. Such a son as he had hoped to be to him. Daniel Hunter had no son; but *he!* for affection, and devotion, and reverence, and service; he would be a dozen sons in one! Oh, yes! if his noble-hearted father-in-law had loved him even when he was perverse, how much more would he love him now, when he should prove himself worthy? Oh! very ardent had been his desires; his aspirations; very admirable his resolutions; very bright and joyous his hopes.

But now! now! Oh! it is a passing bitter thing for death to step in between us and our late remorse, and take the power of compensation out of our hands; a bitter, a severe, an insupportable, a crushing punishment!

So the young man felt it now, that the noble-hearted friend he had wronged so deeply, known only so lately, and now loved and honored so ardently, yet so vainly, was snatched away from his tardy repentance! Had purgatory a worse punishment than that?

The remaining hope, the one last poor hope of seeing him yet alive, of clasping his living hand, of gaining one recognizing glance from his eyes, perhaps of receiving his blessing. This hope, this possibility inspired him; lent wings to his action. That night he left New York for the western part of Maryland.

He hurried on, he travelled day and night. But everywhere,



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everywhere, he heard of Daniel Hunter's extreme illness. In the stage-coaches the conversation of passengers was full of it; at the roadside inns the travellers talked of nothing else; every paper spoke of it; it seemed to be regarded as a sudden and great national calamity. He heard various reports, often inconsistent and contradictory; sometimes that Mr. Hunter was in the last extremity; sometimes that he was dying; *once* that he was dead; but this last dreadful rumor was instantly contradicted by another, that assured the people he was better, much better, that there were hopes.

Thus in almost insufferable anxiety and anguish of mind the poor fellow hurried on, never stopping for needful rest; posting day and night, praying ever lest his friend should die before he reached there; die before he could sob out, on his knees, his bitter repentance, before he could receive forgiveness and his dying blessing.

We must leave him hurrying on, and relate what had in the mean time happened at Howlet Hall.

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Yes! it was true. In the midst of his glorious struggle, the champion of political righteousness had been stricken down with a mortal illness. The news of his attack had spread like wildfire through the country, carrying a sort of consternation with it. For he whom the destroyer had felled was in every respect a man of might—one upon whose integrity, strength and power, and—strange as it may appear, upon whose continued existence the people had quietly, blindly reposed. For with *him* they never remembered to associate the idea of death. It was strange that he should be ill; unaccountable that he should *die*. Such was the deep, unexpressed feeling. And: "What caused his illness?" "What *could* have caused it?" were the questions constantly asked.

The cause was this: there was an approaching Presidential election; and the whole country was aroused to that state of political agitation; not to say frantic madness, into which it is regularly thrown every fourth year.

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Among other things, the old subject of contention, supposed to be partly dead and buried under "Hunter's Bill," was revived again, to sway the election. True, a law had been passed setting it at rest for ever. But if Congress made that law, Congress could *repeal* it again. And at it the politicians went with all their might. And again the nation was divided against itself; section against section, State against State, party against party, neighbor against neighbor, brother against brother, "the father against the son, and the son against the father."

All this was the subject of the bitterest disappointment and well nigh despair to the patriot statesman. It seemed indeed a *useless*, as well as thankless task, to care and toil for the welfare of a country surrendered to the government of mobs; who were themselves the sport of every caprice; the tools of every successive political adventurer. Yet never had he labored so hard, struggled so desperately in the cause of political integrity as now; he wrote innumerable letters to partisans and opponents; great political essays for the leading journals of the country; travelled from county to county, and from State to State; addressed conventions and mass meetings; in short, gave no rest to soul nor body, day nor night. And this unremitting toil was attended by the most harassing anxiety, that wore terribly upon his nervous system, and all combined, brought about a state in which cause and effect acted and reacted upon each other with fatal power.

The convention of his party met at the city of ——, to nominate their candidate for the Presidency. He was a member of that memorable body, and when he arrived unavoidably late upon the first day of its session, he found the convention already divided against itself. *The* great, distracting question had arisen among them, and thrown everything else into confusion. He had come thither with the intention of nominating and supporting General ——, but he found only half the members with him. The others were nearly equally divided in favor of Mr. ——, and Mr. ——. Mr. Hunter addressed the meeting with even more than his usual power of logic and eloquence—he labored severely

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to bring the meeting to some unity of feeling, to some harmony of action. In vain! in vain! For days, for weeks, anarchy reigned in the assembly, which grew daily more tempestuous.

It was on the brink of breaking up in a riot, when Daniel Hunter arose for the last time to address them. I know not what of Divine inspiration was evolved by that pale, majestic countenance; but never before had their god-like orator stood before them in such imposing, such commanding, such sovereign majesty of power. It might be the darkness of the grave, and the glory of heaven, that marked his speaking countenance in such strong lines of shade and light. Every eye was fixed upon him; every ear bent to catch his words; a spirit of prophetic awe subdued the meeting to attention. He spoke; spoke as he had never spoken before; spoke as at such an epoch of his country's extremity a dying patriot might speak; yet there was nothing breathing of death in his manner; he spoke with tremendous power; those who heard him recall with wonder and enthusiasm his form and face as he stood there; instinct with mighty inspiration; his voice, as it rolled in thunder over their heads, or subsided in low, sweet, persuasive tones, penetrated the deepest recesses of their hearts with convincing power. We all know the speech. In the archives of legislative oratory it is preserved as the master-piece of argument and eloquence. It prevailed over the anarchy of the convention. It secured the nomination of General ——. It answered its purpose. It succeeded; *though he who made it never knew it.* For at the close of his address Mr. Hunter sat down, amid the silence that followed—the silence more eloquent than the loudest applause—the silence that was fearfully broken at length by a voice, exclaiming in alarm,

"Mr. Hunter has fallen!"

The meeting arose in a mass. His friends gathered around him. In their arms he was raised.

The fatal intelligence found Mrs. Hunter cheerfully occupied at her writing-table in her morning room at the hotel, and alas, how unprepared for the blow!

Daniel Hunter—who, by the pressure of political engagements,

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had been of late much separated from his family—had, upon this occasion, brought his wife and daughter to the city, and taken apartments at the Metropolitan Hotel.

And upon this fatal day, Mrs. Hunter, gracefully wrapped in an elegant negligé, sat bending over her writing-table. Beside her lay a pile of manuscript in stenography, from which she was writing out letters which she successively laid in a neat pile for signature. For in the hurry of his business, the lady was acting as her husband's amanuensis.

In fact, every morning when the mail came in, Daniel Hunter received about a hundred letters, more or less, which it was necessary to notice. And before going to the convention for the day, he sat down and opened them in succession, rapidly sketching off in short hand the reply to each, and filing them for his wife to answer, during the hours of his absence. Long ago Mrs. Hunter had acquainted herself with the art of stenography, because, she said, it was an ingenious accomplishment, and very convenient in taking down a paragraph that pleased her in any sermon, lecture or oration; but her principal motive, which she never mentioned, was to be useful in just such frequent emergencies as the present, when she could considerably lessen the burden of the over-worked and toiling politician, her husband. And very dear to her heart was this task, for it not only lightened his labors, but secured his society to her for the evening.

And so she sat, with affectionate diligence bending over her work, the long, black ringlets, rich and abundant still, though here and there a silver thread gleamed undisturbed amid their blackness, drooped, half-veiling the pale, intellectual face. Once in a while, she would lift her head and smile, as she gazed on her beautiful child—her Maud, who sat reading upon an ottoman near her feet. Miss Hunter was in full dinner dress, for she was obliged to receive all callers to whom her mother denied herself that day.

Thus were they sitting when the messenger of ill came—without haste, without bustle. There was no noise nor confusion below—no hurrying steps upon the staircase—nothing to herald

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an approaching fate—nothing to warn them of a calamity at hand. She had just finished the last letter, looked it over to see if it were a fair copy, and finding it all right, had smilingly laid it upon the pile. Smilingly—alas! it was her last smiling moment on earth—and yet she knew it not—suspected it not!

There came a soft tap at the door.

And Mrs. Hunter, supposing it to be a waiter, with a message or a card, or some such matter, without looking up from her work of arranging the papers, said,

"Come in."

And a quiet, gentlemanly-looking person, clothed in black, entered, bowing, and somewhat deprecatingly advanced into the room.

Surprised at the unwonted, unannounced intrusion of a stranger, the lady arose, and, with one hand resting upon the table, stood with perhaps the slightest degree of hauteur in her manner, as she *looked* her inquiry as to his business there.

"Mrs. Hunter, I presume," said the gentleman, in a very low voice, approaching and bowing; "Mrs. Hunter?"

"That is my name, sir."

"Madam, I am extremely sorry to inform you that Mr. Hunter has been taken suddenly ill at the convention rooms—a stroke of apoplexy, it is feared."

"No, no, no! Angels in Heaven, no!" exclaimed Maud, starting up.

But Mrs. Hunter stood, still and silent, gazing at the messenger of evil, while all the color died slowly, slowly from her cheeks—died never to live there again.

"Pray do not be alarmed, madam—the attack is hoped not to be fatal."

The lady reeled back as though she must have fallen, and clutched the edge of the table for support.

Maud, pale as death, rushed to her side, encircled her waist with her arms, drew her head against her shoulder, spoke to her.

"Mother—dear mother—dear, dearest mother!"

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"Be quiet, Maud—be quiet, my dear child. *Where is he, sir?*" spoke the lady, trying to sustain herself.

"They are bringing him here, madam. They are already here, I believe," answered the messenger, and as he spoke, the sound of many slow and heavy footsteps were heard approaching

They bore the stricken Titan in; they laid him on his bed; anxious and agitated friends were hurried from the room; physicians gathered around the couch. How suddenly, how terribly the world was changed and darkened to the sorely-smitten wife and daughter—for them a hideous night had lowered over the earth—a hideous nightmare settled on their lives.

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For many, many hours, Daniel Hunter lay insensible, and for many days thereafter speechless. And oh! to *her*, his adoring wife, it was unutterable anguish to hang over him, and witness his ineffectual efforts to speak. That he, the trumpet-tongued, whose clarion notes had reached and governed multitudes,—he, the mighty in field and forum, should be there, so *powerless*. Oh, awful! oh, inexorable power of Death!

His first words, on partially recovering his speech, were addressed to Augusta.

She was standing by him, bending over him, holding and pressing his chilled hand to see if she could impart to it any warmth, looking fondly in his face to catch and interpret his wishes in its expression, when she felt his cold fingers gently close upon her own, and met his faded eyes fixed upon hers with ineffable affection, and saw his lips move; and when she bent down her ear to hear his faltering tones, he whispered earnestly, "*Wife! wife!*" and gazed upon her loved face till his dimmed eyes grew warm and brilliant with the life of a love "stronger than death." She bowed and kissed the clammy brow, and lips and hands. Nor had she any difficulty in maintaining her composure; for since the physicians had given her to understand there were no hopes of his restoration, the hand of death seemed coldly closing around her own heart, chilling, calming, awing her into a strange resignation.

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The next day, while she was sitting by his bed, he beckoned, and, when she stooped to listen, whispered—"Home, Augusta."

And after a few days she prepared to take him to Howlet Hall. The doctors remonstrated; but he repeated his brief, expressive plea—"Home, Augusta;" and could she withstand it? She had never opposed him in her life, and could she begin now? She had never opposed him in the noon of his health, strength and power, and could she do so now in the night of his illness and weakness? No, no, no; forbid it every feeling of love, honor and faith. The doctors told her that the journey might be dangerous. She inquired whether to give it up and detain Mr. Hunter in town could save his life? They frankly answered —*no*. She then asked whether it would prolong it? They could not promise even that.

Their replies confirmed her resolution, and she hastened her preparations accordingly. A very large and commodious carriage was prepared for the invalid's use, and driven by his own coachman. Augusta rode with him to support and nurse him. Maud and her maid followed in the family travelling carriage, which was laden with their baggage, and driven by Mr. Hunter's body servant. An eminent physician accompanied the sorrowing party—he rode in his own buggy. They travelled very slowly, with short stages and frequent rests. They arrived at Howlet Hall, and Daniel Hunter was supported to his room and laid upon his bed—a shattered, nerveless, dying man.

Though exhausted and failing in almost every other respect, Mr. Hunter had recovered the use of speech—though his voice was faint and broken, and he conversed but little—chiefly with his dear Augusta. Since his attack it seemed that the wearing cares of politics had lost their hold upon his mind—at least by no word or sign did he manifest the slightest interest in the subject that had lately so deeply engaged his whole heart.

But one morning, while she sat in his room, he beckoned her to approach, and inquired:

"Have the convention agreed upon their nominee, do you know, Augusta?"

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She could not inform him. She had not looked into a paper for many days. She had not thought; she had not cared about the convention. She thought, she cared only for the stricken form before her. And now that he was to pass away, it was nothing to her who was nominated; who was dropped. As I said before—noble woman though she was—she was no Spartan matron, who in the good of her country could sink all other good; she was a devoted wife, whose very political opinions had taken character from those of the husband she adored.

Yet now she felt regret that she could not answer him satisfactorily. She said she would go into the library and look over the week's papers, and find out. She went, and in less than half an hour returned and told him that the convention had not yet fixed upon their candidate, though for the last several ballots the votes for General —— had been steadily on the increase.

A smile played for a moment on his wasted features, and then beckoning her to stoop, he whispered,

"Watch the papers, Augusta. Let me know the moment you see the nomination of their candidate settled."

She promised to do so, and arranged the pillows comfortably under his head, and smoothed the coverlet, and then, at his request, sat on the side of the bed and sang his favorite hymn in a low, melodious soothing voice, until he fell asleep. She then gave up her watch to Letty, and went down to receive the evening mail, which had just then arrived.

There were letters upon letters of inquiry and condolence—but those for the present she shuffled all aside, and sought the last papers. The desired news was there—the nomination of General —— was announced in triumphal terms. She took the paper to Mr. Hunter's room to wait there until he should awake. She dismissed Letty, and took her place at the side of his bed. She looked at him and her heart grew sick—for oh! a fearful change had come upon that face, a purple darkness had fallen in the hollows of his eyes and cheeks, an expression, indescribable, but warning of approaching dissolution, had settled upon his countenance. He was not asleep; she could see that; and she bent over him to tell him, according to her promise.

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"Mr. Hunter—"

At the sound of her loved voice his eyelids quivered and unclosed.

"The convention have nominated their candidate."

His eyes were fixed upon her fondly.

"The nominee is General ——."

It was doubtful whether he heard, or understood, or cared; but his eyes were fixed most fondly upon her—his lips moved. She knelt down by him and bowed her head to his. His eyes lingered over her lovingly; idly he toyed with her silken ringlets. And she bent and kissed his altered brow again and again—many times, repressing the flood of tears ready to burst forth.

He spoke in a low, faltering, broken voice, with many interruptions—he said:—

"My Augusta, I was strong and should have sustained thee—wise (in men's opinions) and should have taught thee—able and should have cherished, and shielded, and comforted thee—but I have deprived thee of rest, of friends, of home, of all that makes up the domestic and social happiness of a woman. And thou hast reversed the rule—thou hast cherished, inspired and strengthened me." There was a pause, during which he continued to play idly with her ringlets, while he gazed into her face with a look of mournful, remorseful tenderness; then he resumed —"My Augusta! all the rest, comfort, *happiness* I have known in life, have come, from *thee*. Since I have known thee, *all*, Augusta, *all*. Do you think the people ever thanked me—ever loved me for the health, strength, life, expended in their service? *Never*, Augusta, *never!* (Nor indeed did I ever labor for thanks, or love, or any other refinement of pay.) And *you*—did you ever reproach me for the loss of home, neighborhood, familiar friends, all that makes even the poorest laborer's wife happy? *Never*, my own? *never*, I am sure of it, even in thought."

She had not as yet replied to him, because she could not trust herself to do so; her heart was too full. But now she lifted up her head and spoke, in a choking voice—

"Oh! did you not *know I knew* you loved me all the time?

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That your love was the best, dearest, crowning blessing of my life? Oh! don't you *know* that I never desired anything better than to be with you, wherever your duty called you? Oh! must I tell you now, at this late hour, that there was nothing earthly I valued so much as your presence—nothing I dreaded so much as a parting?"

"And yet, Augusta, we must part."

"No, no, not so—I feel it—the grave cannot divide thee and me," thought the lady, but she did not speak.

He was gazing on her with unutterable affection—he slowly raised his nearly powerless hand and laid it on her bowed head.

"*God bless thee.* God bless thee, as I am sure He will."

"He *has* blessed me—blessed me richly in thy love."

He remained silent so long that she thought he had dropped off into a doze, but when she looked up, his hands were folded, and his eyes raised—he was engaged in silent prayer. This was the longest conversation that they had held since his attack, and it was the last confidential one.

For there were fresh arrivals of visitors at the Hall every day, and almost every hour. Since the news of Mr. Hunter's illness had been bruited abroad, and especially since it was known that the great statesman really lay upon his death-bed, his friends and admirers from all parts of the country flocked to his neighborhood and called at the Hall.

Mrs. Hunter received all comers with her usual air of suave and stately courtesy, and the composed manner of the lady misled them at first sight to argue a more hopeful condition of the invalid than had been reported. In which respect they were soon undeceived. The most favored of his personal and political friends had the entrcé to his chamber, or to speak exactly, with well-meaning but mistaken zeal, they obtruded themselves upon the dying statesman, filling his room to the exclusion often of his own family, effectually preventing all private communication with them, except it were obtained by the formal ceremony of turning out the intruders and summoning the others, and totally hindering those little impromptu words of affection or expressions of his will,

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which it might have comforted his afflicted wife and daughter to have remembered and fulfilled.

It was in death as it had been in his life.

*Then* the illustrious statesman had never been able to keep an hour of his time, an event of his life, scarcely a thought of his brain, or an affection of his heart, apart from the intrusion, the espionage, the criticism or the sympathy of the multitude.

*Now* they invaded his chamber—they crowded around his dying bed to the exclusion of his own beloved ones.

True, Augusta kept her station near the head of his bed, but she might not speak to, or hear from him one warm heart word, for there was always a clergyman or two bending over his pillow, a half-dozen brother senators and representatives and others near, and worse than all, two reporters, hovering in the passage near the chamber door, and peeping in and stippling down their hieroglyphics every time it was opened.

As Daniel Hunter had lived in public, so he must die in public. And he was going fast—hourly his senses waned—he fell gradually into the stupor preceding death.

He lay in this state for several hours, during which all attempts to attract his attention proved utterly futile, except when his wife would bend over him, take his hand and look into his eyes—*then* the fast stiffening fingers would try to close around hers—and the failing eyes would soften with affection or lighten with intelligence. Long after he was entirely insensible to all other external impressions, he recognized her touch and glance. He knew her to the last. The heart! the heart! it is the first to live, the last to expire! He knew her to the last.

And, therefore, she never left him again.

After having spent days and nights by his bedside, against the expostulations of friends and physicians, Doctor Henry, their old family practitioner, took her hand and felt her pulse.

"Mrs. Hunter," he said, "*most positively* you must leave this room; go and take some refreshment and lie down and sleep. You, yourself, are sinking fast."

"And I assure you, doctor, I should sink faster anywhere else but *here*."

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He looked at her, her hollow eyes, and cheeks and temples, her ashen hue; and dropped her wrist and turned away with a deep sigh. The lady said,

"Be easy about me, dear friend. I am well enough. They say 'the heart knoweth its own bitterness.' I say it knoweth its own *blessedness* as well!"

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At noon, that day, Falconer arrived by the new railroad at the Summit station. Here the young man made inquiries, and received information that raised his anxiety to the highest pitch. He procured a horse and galloped rapidly to Howlet Hall.

As he crossed the Barrier, entered the Hollow, and approached the house, everything around revealed the passage of some momentous event. Four or five carriages, mud spattered, and with wearied horses, stood neglected before the door. The foot-paths were unswept, and the stairs leading up to the portico unwashed for many days.

The front door was ajar; the knocker was muffled. No servant was in attendance. He entered the hall; that, too, was dusty, empty and neglected. He rapped gently with the end of his riding-whip. Then a man servant came out from a side room. Falconer knew him, addressed him by name, and asked after his master. Henry shook his head, and answered that there had been no change since yesterday morning. He then led the way into a parlor, placed a chair for the visitor, and took his card to carry up.

Falconer looked around him; even in this sumptuous room everything wore the same dreary air of neglect. The rich velvet covered chairs were coated with dust; dust had gathered in the folds of the satin damask curtains; a superb Chinese screen of stained glass that stretched across the room was dim with fly specks; the vases on the stands were filled with dead flowers, emitting a faint and sickening odor, and two tall silver candlesticks with their guttered wax candle ends, stood upon the centre table, left there from the night before.

He had scarcely made these mournful observations before the



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door swung slowly open, and his beloved Maud entered the room.

And oh! how thin, and pale, and sorrowful, and self-neglected *she*, too, looked! Her air was that of one who had watched and wept for many days and nights. She wore a white wrapper, very carelessly; and her bright hair, if not dishevelled, was certainly disordered. She looked—not near so pretty as when he had seen her last—but to him—oh! how much more *beautiful*. He sprang to meet her, as she advanced slowly, holding out her fair hands. And "Falconer!" and "Dearest, dearest Maud!" were their simultaneous greetings, as he folded her to his bosom. They spoke no more for a little while; for as soon as her head fell upon his shoulder, she burst into tears, and wept abundantly. Presently she lifted her head, and wiped her eyes, and said—

"A sad greeting I have given you, dearest Falconer—a sorrowful, sorrowful greeting. But you *are* welcome. I am very glad to see you. Yet—to meet in such an hour as this. *My father! oh! my dear father!*" she cried, dropping her head, and weeping afresh."

"How is he, Maud?" inquired the young man, in the most gentle, tender, sympathizing tone and manner. How is he, dearest Maud?"

"Alas, Falconer!"

"No better, Maud?"

"No! *no better*. Oh! Falconer that has been the despairing answer to all inquiries; how many dreadful days! No better! for, Falconer, since his first attack he has grown daily worse and worse! I don't believe the doctors know what is the matter with him. They said first his attack was apoplectic; now they differ as to the nature of his illness. They agree only upon this, Falconer—*that he must die.*" Again she wept convulsively. Presently she said, "I have not seen him for two days, Falconer."

"Not seen him for two days?"

"Oh, no!"

"Why is that, dear Maud?"

"Oh! I have no self-control; none at all, I think. When I

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see him, I cannot refrain from weeping. I am not like my dear mother; *she* has not shed a tear since his illness. I sometimes wish she *would*; for oh! Falconer she looks so strangely. It seems as if the shadows of death were falling upon *her* too!"

Tenderly and reverentially caressing her, he led her to a sofa, and sought to soothe her grief.

While yet they conversed, there was a sudden opening of doors, and a hurrying of steps. Impressed with a prophetic feeling, Falconer arose, and stepped to the door and opened it. A gentleman had rapidly descended the stairs, and was hurrying through the hall. Falconer stepped out and accosted him.

"Sir; will you inform me—has anything happened?"

"Mr. Hunter has just expired, sir," answered the gentleman, hurrying on.

Falconer stepped back into the room. Maud was at the door, pale as death with dread. She caught his arm, and gazed into his face in the speechless, breathless agony of anxiety.

"Be composed, my dearest Maud."

Still that wild, wild gaze of inquiry.

"Dearest, dearest Maud, it is all over!"

Her grasp relaxed from his arm. He caught her as she was falling, and bore her, swooning, to the sofa.

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## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE WIDOW.

And what unto her is the world beside
With all its change of time and tide—
Its living things—its earth and sky—
Are nothing to her mind and eye.
And heedless as the dead is she,
Of aught around, beneath, above,
As if all else had passed away,
With him she only lived to love.—*Byron.*

DANIEL HUNTER had expired in the arms of his Augusta.

When his head sunk forward on her bosom, and they perceived that he was dead, Mr. Lovel approached, and gently and reverentially relieved the lady of her beloved burden, and took her hand to lead her from the room.

She gave no sign of resistance, or even of unwillingness. Pale as marble, and seemingly as destitute of feeling, she suffered herself to be conducted from the chamber of death to her own. And there she sat down, as white, as still, as though she herself were lifeless.

Mr. Lovel stood by her, bending over her, holding her hand, murmuring in her ear the common-places of sympathy and comfort—well meant—but so vain—so utterly vain—that they must have vexed her, could anything now have done so. But she was past all that now. Nothing could disturb her more. She answered not—she understood not a word of the gentle flow of sound that fell upon her ears. She sat back in her chair, and closed her eyes.

Mr. Lovel thought she looked weary, and in need of rest. He pressed her hand, and left the room, to send his wife to her assistance.

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The first thought and words of Maud, on recovering her recollection, were—

"*Oh, my mother!*"

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And the poor child strove hard to control herself, and eagerly took the restoratives offered her, and suppressed the grief ready to burst forth for the dead father, that she might go and console her living mother.

She went up stairs, to Mrs. Hunter's chamber.

She found the lady sitting in the same still way—sitting back in her chair, with her hands carelessly folded on her lap, and her eyes gazing on vacancy.

The maiden fondly, tenderly and silently embraced her. But she took no notice of her child. Maud looked at her in grieved amazement—embraced her again more fervently than before, and looked in her face. She was still gazing vacantly. Maud knelt before her, and embraced her knees, and unclasped her hands, and kissed and wept over them, and threw them around her own neck—and called her by every tender, loving epithet, and tried every affectionate device to win her notice.

But Augusta gave no sign of recognition. Maud started up in alarm, and clasped her around the neck, exclaiming, wildly—

"Mother—dearest mother—oh! don't look so; speak to me. It is your Maud!"

The lady's pale lips moved, and the words issued from them in a cold, low, monotone, as, without moving her eyes, she said—

"The life has passed away; the light, and warmth, and strength have passed away, and left me here in the cold and dark, and falling, falling, falling, whither?"

In the utmost distress, Maud fell at her feet, embracing her knees, weeping bitterly, and crying—

"Mother, mother, my own dear mother, don't look so; don't talk so. Look at me, sweet mother. Speak to me. It is your poor Maud. You used to love me; you used to—"

Slowly the lady's eyes descended from their fixed stare, and settled on her daughter's sorrowful face—slowly the light of recognition came into them, and she raised her hands and placed them on her daughter's head, and looking at her in the same still, tearless way, she said—

"The Lord bless you my child—the Lord for ever bless you, *Daniel Hunter's precious child.*"

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"Dear mother, are you better? How do you feel? Shall I bring you anything!"

"Where has it gone, Maud?"

"What, sweet mother?"

"The life—the love that lived with us, and blessed us so, a little while ago."

"To heaven, mamma; surely to heaven. Ah! dearest mamma—you that were my guiding spirit—what *has* so dimmed your faith?"

The lady did not answer. She had raised her eyes and fixed them afar off.

*Sorrow*, by prostrating her nervous system; palsying her heart and brain, had dimmed her vision of faith. Let no Pharisee, full of self-righteousness and spiritual pride, blame her too severely. Let such an one remember that there was an hour when the blessed Saviour cried—

"Why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

Mrs. Lovel entered with a servant, bearing wine and crackers.

"Here, Augusta," she said, "Dr. Henry says you *must* take something."

Maud took a glass of wine and put it in her mother's hand.

Augusta raised it to her lips, but immediately replaced it on the waiter, saying—

"I cannot swallow."

Mrs. Lovel looked at her, and, noticing for the first time, the awful pallor of her face, she become frightened, exclaiming—

"Augusta! My sister! My dear sister! Oh! do not do so—do not, Augusta!"

"Now what would you have? I am very quiet."

"Yes, yes—*too* quiet—that's what I object to."

"I might well weep and lament. He deserved all my tears—but I cannot do so."

"Augusta, you must rouse yourself, and take something—if you do not, indeed you will sink. You have much yet left to live for. Think of your child."

"Now what is it you would have me do? Oh! I am so weary."

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"Think of *his* child, Augusta—think of his orphan child, here kneeling by your feet."

"I do. I do. God bless her. God for ever bless her—as he surely will—she is such a *good* child."

"Oh! then, Augusta, for her sake, and her father's sake, do try to bear up."

Letty came in—came up to the lady in her quiet, soothing way, and gently took her hand and asked,

"How do you feel, dearest Augusta?"

"Contented, Letty. Contented."

Letty held her wrist, and fixing her gentle gray eyes steadily on her face, read her countenance.

"Nay, now, never look at me so mournfully. Indeed, I am not unhappy. I am very well. It makes no difference. Ah! do you think I wished him to live to be old and infirm—to see those weary, heavy days in which he should say, 'I have no pleasure in them.' No—no—at least I mean it is not right to wish it. He has gone in his glorious day of life and fame, ere yet one laurel leaf had drooped upon his brow. And it is well. The Lord 'doeth all things well.' Let me lie down, girls. I am very tired."

Letty, who still held her wrist, and studied her countenance, now desired Mrs. Lovel to take Maud out and leave Augusta in her own charge.

Maud got up and kissed her mother, and left the room with Lucy. Letty then gently undressed the suffering lady, assisted her to bed, drew the curtains, and left her to repose.

She lay there with her hands clasped tightly above her head, not sleeping, but preternaturally vigilant. She heard the hurrying to and fro, and the voices below stairs, and she knew what they were about. She lay many hours in that darkened chamber, with only one desire in her heart, to lie down by the side of her dead. Afternoon waned into evening, and the room became pitch dark. And then some one softly opened the door and stole into the room to see if she were asleep. Augusta called—

"Is that you, Letty?"

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"Yes, dearest Augusta. How do you feel now?"

"Where have they laid him, Letty?"

"For the present in his room, on the bedstead where he died. The committee, who have assumed the direction of all the arrangements, have decided that he shall lay in state in the saloon the day after to-morrow. They have sent a messenger express for the undertakers and upholsterers."

"In state!—but it does not matter. Who watches by him to-night, Letty?"

Letty named some half-dozen gentlemen who had assumed that duty.

"Give them my thanks, and desire them from me to watch, not in the chamber where he lies, but in the adjoining front room."

"Yes, I will do so, but don't trouble yourself about details, dear. Augusta, believe me, everything will go on in the best possible order. I came to see if you were awake, and to tell you that I shall bring you up some tea and toast, and that you must take it."

"Dearest Letty, don't ask me, when I cannot. How is Maud, and where is she?"

"I made her take something and go to rest. She is asleep now."

"God bless her. And now, Letty, bid me good night, and let me rest; rest is my only medicine."

With a deep sigh Letty stooped down and kissed her sister, and once more withdrew from the room.

And still she lay there in that dark room, with her hands locked above her head, listening to the sounds of the household preparing to retire to bed. By midnight the house was perfectly still. The family were all asleep. And she arose and threw on a white dressing-gown, and glided softly down the stairs, pausing to listen. She reached the hall of the first floor; all was quiet; no sound was heard but the subdued voices of the watchers in the front chamber.

She went to the door of the back chamber—cautiously opened it and entered. At last—at last she was alone with her dead.

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There was a wax taper left burning on the hearth. She took it up and approached the bed, and threw its light over the form extended there. She reverently uncovered the face and gazed upon it—white—cold—motionless—expressionless—dead.

Dead? Perhaps not. Of extreme despair is sometimes born a mad hope—mad from its birth. Perhaps, after all, he might not be dead—who knew? She had heard of people given up for dead lying in a trance, and recovering to live many years. Why might it not be so with him? What if after all he were only in a trance.

She sat down her taper, and again approached the body. You would have thought her crazed had you seen her at work, with her pale still face, and her gleaming eyes and painfully attentive air, as she ran her hand in his bosom and placed it on his heart, and bent her ear to his closed lips. You might have thought her crazed, but she was not. Too well she knew when the trial was past, that the cold, hard form was dead—dead!

She dropped her head upon that bosom; that loved bosom that in life had so tenderly sheltered and cherished her; now unresponsive, silent, senseless! She sank upon the bed and clasped that cold form to her heart and wept. They were blessed tears; they loosened the tight and burning cincture around her brain; they relieved while they exhausted her.

In that hour she lived over again all their past life—again she is the stately little lady on the deck of the schooner, and turns scornfully away from the beautiful, earnest-eyed boy who presumes to address her—again the vessel is rocking in the storm—is submerged—the wild waters are dashing around her—she is sinking—suffocating in the foaming brine—she feels herself clasped—upheld and borne above the waves—she loses her senses, and recovers them to find in her deliverer the gallant boy—again she shares with him the rugged mountain hut. Then she is the maiden living in his mother's home—schooling her own proud spirit, bearing the taunts and insults of his family for the love she bore the handsome, noble-hearted youth who had won her whole heart. Next she is the happy—the



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most blest wife and mother—the sharer of his domestic life and public honors. Then comes their first great sorrow—and again his strong arm is around her—his strong heart bears her up—his earnest, deep-toned voice falls on her ear in words of strength and comfort. Next they are co-laborers, finding consolation in the cause of humanity, and in their own deeper love and closer union with each other and with God. She saw him again, the brave, beautiful boy who had saved her life; the gallant, aspiring youth who had wooed her for his bride; the thoughtful man, who had shared her deepest sorrow, and sustained her through it; the righteous politician, whom neither the certainty of popularity nor of profit could bribe to swerve from the rectitude of principle; the Christian, who had realized in his own life and practice the Gospel rule of Faith, Hope, and Charity.

Now this dead form was all that was left.

She could weep no more, but she crept closer to that dear form—dearer—oh, yes! far dearer, though the soul had fled, than all the living world beside.

Her daughter? Yes, she had loved Maud with all a mother's tenderness. But long years before Maud had lived—ever since her own childhood, all her thoughts and affections had centered upon this being—her life had been identified with the life now fled—and there was nothing in the wide world without so near, so dear, as this cold clay.

She crept closer to that loved form—she laid her face and lips against that dearest face—she drew that stiffening arm over her neck, and resigned herself to rest. A feeling of exhaustion, of benign repose and content, was stealing over her senses. She was really cold, prostrated, and breathing fitfully, but she did not know it, for a heavenly dream was brightening around her—the boundaries of the room seemed lost in light, and over her stood a shining form, in whose all-glorious countenance she recognized the familiar face of her beloved. He held out his arms to receive her—she raised herself to meet him—her soul filled with joy.

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Early in the morning the upholsterers and undertakers arrived at the Hall. Great preparations were on foot for the funeral. The illustrious statesman might not be laid in his last resting-place with the Christian simplicity that attends the burial of other men. The officials commenced operations, and made all the arrangements with quietness and celerity. The saloon was speedily prepared and decorated for the solemnity of lying in state.

And when all was ready, they went in grave procession up the stairs, and, preceded by Mr. Lovel and Falconer, entered the room of death.

But there a vision met their eyes that rebuked all the vain show, and touched the human hearts in their bosoms! For there, on the bed beside the dead, with her face hidden on his cold bosom, lay his faithful wife—so still they thought she slept. Mr. Lovel approached, in awe, to wake her, but paused a moment to contemplate this sorrowful picture of love and death. She lay beside him with her arms around him—one arm under his shoulders, the other over his breast—her head upon his bosom with her face downward, and her rich black hair flowing scarf-like across his chest.

Mr. Lovel stooped, and gently and respectfully accosted her

She did not reply.

He spoke again, more earnestly and closer to her ear.

She gave no sign of consciousness.

He then, with reverential tenderness, took her hand—started! —looked at her anxiously—raised her hastily, turning that beautiful pale face up to the light. Augusta was dead!—but oh, how content—how "God-satisfied" in death! The passing spirit had set its seal upon the smooth, serene brow, and the calmly-closed lips. The expression of her face was a new revelation of the heavenly rest.

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Poor Maud! it seemed a cruel stroke that deprived her of her mother that day. And she knelt and wept by that bed as if her heart must break. Nor could she be got out of the room until

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Mr. Lovel took her up in his arms, and carried her, fainting, away. She grieved as one who would not be comforted—almost resenting the efforts of her friends to soothe her—crying, distractedly,

"I know what you are going to say—'Death is the common lot—it is the Lord's will—we must submit. It is useless and sinful to repine. *They* are in heaven.' Oh, I know it all, and I know it is true. Haven't I said the same thing a hundred times to *other* mourners, and do not I say it now to myself? Only it does not stop my heart from bleeding."

Mr. Lovel expostulated with her, told her she was rebellious to Heaven, etc.

"Don't lecture me, Uncle Lovel. Our Saviour never did so—Jesus never rebuked Mary and Martha for weeping over their dead brother. No, indeed, he wept with them. The Lord will pity me also. Only leave me alone in peace, and I will try to be quiet and the Lord will help me."

After this, Letty sent every one away from her room, and took the exclusive care of Maud upon herself. And in another lull of her tempest of grief, the poor girl said,

"My tears will force their way, dear Letty—but oh! don't you know that I *feel* it is selfish to wish *her* back in this lonesome world? too lonesome for her, now *he* has left it! For oh! Letty, I know very well that not even *I*, her only child, could have filled the aching void in her heart and life, left by *his* loss. I know he was her all in all, years and years before I ever saw the light, and years on years after I was lost. I know that I was only a brief episode in her life, and he was its whole history. They lived and died together—they are re-united in the land of the blest. And it seems to me so well—only—I cannot—help——"

Her words were arrested by another gust of tears.

As for Letty, she essayed no vain common place words of consolation. She merely held the maiden in her arms, and let her sob as much as she pleased upon her sympathizing bosom, undisturbed by anything but a soothing caress. And thus Letty comforted the orphan.

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After all, the funeral was a very quiet one. Daniel Hunter and Augusta were interred together, in the family burial ground at Howlet Hall. A monument of the simplest form of architecture—an obelisk of white marble—marks their grave.

After the funeral, the will of Daniel Hunter was opened and read. It was found that he left the whole of his real estate and personal property to his wife, Augusta, and constituted her the sole executrix of the will. But the widow had survived her husband only a few hours, and had died intestate. Consequently, Maud Hunter, who had, within a few days past, attained her majority, was now the sole heiress and actual mistress of Howlet Hall. Mr. and Mrs. Lovel invited their young relative to return with them, and spend a few weeks, for change of air and scene, at the Parsonage. But no persuasions could induce the orphan to leave the home rendered so sacred by the recent loss of her parents.

Letty Hunter, therefore, remained to keep her company, and to superintend the re-arrangement of the disordered house.

Falconer was summoned to Washington city to assist in the setting up of his statue. He took a reluctant leave of his betrothed, and with the approbation of Mr. Lovel, promised to return as soon as his errand was concluded, and spend the spring and summer at Howlet Hall.

## CHAPTER XLV.

### THE TWO BRIDES.

Bring flowers, fresh flowers for the bride to wear,
They were born to blush in her shining hair;
Her place is now by her husband's side,
Bring flowers for the locks of the fair young bride.—*Mrs. Hemans.*

And now I have to record one of those unexpected, happy events, that seem so much like blind accident.



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It was about a month after the death of Daniel Hunter and Augusta. The young spring was smiling over the earth, awakening vegetation. The skies were blue, the breezes soft, the fields and forests clothed with tender verdure, the fruit trees all in blossom, the gardens fragrant with flowers, and groves musical with birds. The sad heart of the orphan felt the influence, and trembled with the budding of its own new life and joy. Within the Hall all was beautiful order and comfort.

One morning Letty and Maud sat at needle-work in the boudoir of the latter. Falconer, who had returned the day previous, read to them from a volume of Wordsworth. A servant entered with a card on a salver, which he handed to his mistress. Maud examined it with a puzzled look.

"'*Joseph Barton, Iowa City.*' I don't know him at all—I never heard of him before, I'm sure."

But Letty jumped from her seat, went red and pale, and sat down again.

"'Joseph Barton?' Who did he ask for, Thomas?" inquired Maud, still perplexing herself over the card.

"For you, ma'am—for Miss Hunter."

"He must be some old friend of my father's. Thomas, return to the gentleman, and say that I will be down in a few minutes."

"No, no, no, no—it is I that he wants to see," exclaimed Letty, nervously.

"*You.* He asked for Miss Hunter," said Maud.

"That is my name also, though I think everybody forgets that I ever had any other than Letty."

"Then this gentleman is really an acquaintance of yours—you know him?"

"Eh? Yes—no—I don't know—that is, I used to know—an old—an old *acquaintance*, as you say," said Letty.

"I never *did* see her so discomposed," said Maud, as the former left the room.

Meanwhile, Letty, with her heart throbbing in her throat, and drepriving her of speech and breath, paused upon the landing, and leaning against the balustrades, exhorted herself as follows—

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"Now, Letty Hunter, you poor, miserable, little forlornity, do, for Heaven's sake, remember yourself, and don't turn a fool at your age—don't—it would be too ridiculous. You have led a sensible life, and haven't exposed yourself up to this day. Now take care. Think of all the sentimental old maids you ever saw or read of in all the comedies and satires that ever fell under your notice, and be upon your guard. Lord bless you, Letty, consider—that visitor in the drawing-room is only a middle-aged, corpulent, western merchant, who is on his way east to purchase goods, and has stopped at the Summit railway station, and just dropped over here to see an old, an *old acquaintance*. Therefore, steady, Letty, steady—and for Heaven's sake; don't let anybody find you out. Now do you think I can trust you?" and she went down and entered the drawing-room.

And sure enough, there, in the middle of the room, stood the merchant, a stout man of forty-five, with thick, curling black hair, and a square, deeply bronzed face, enlivened by a fine set of very white teeth, and a pair of dark, smiling eyes; not looking as if the years of absence had gone very hard with *him;* the last man in the world, from his appearance, to keep his heart and life sacred to the memory of an early love.

Letty came in formally, freezingly, firmly, preparing to say,

"Mr. Barton, I presume; pray be seated, sir."

But he met her half way, smiling cordially, confidently holding out his hand, and saying, "Letty," in a tone that made her forget her reserve and caution, and meet him as if they had parted but yesterday, *except*, that she exclaimed,

"Oh! Joseph—Joseph Barton, is it really you?"

"As sure as you live it is I, Letty," he said, heartily shaking both her hands at once, laughing to conceal the tears in his eyes, and talking a little incoherently—"don't you see it is I—don't you know me? I knew *you* at once—should have known you if I'd met you at Nootka Sound or Cape Coast Colony."

"*Should* you now, and I so changed?"

"Changed! Why you're not changed the least in the world. I don't see the slighest change. And as wicked as ever, I'll

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warrant. Eh, Letty? Still death to all sentiment? a scorner of all love? a skeptic as to constancy? Eh, Letty?" he said, holding her hands tightly, and drawing her towards him and trying to look into her dear, familiar eyes, which, half-laughing and half-mortified, she turned away, saying,

"Don't talk nonsense to me at my age."

"There, I knew it—the same scoffer that she ever was, and she pretends she's changed."

"You know what I meant—*faded*," said Letty.

"Faded! My dear little witch, that's a good one!"

"True," said Letty. "I never had any bloom to fade. I was a wizzen child, and a wizzen girl, and now, as you say, I'm a wizzen old witch."

"I said nothing of the kind, you slanderer. But come and sit down. Aint you going to let me have a seat?"

Presently they found themselves seated on the sofa. After a little while Joseph Barton said,

"Do you know what brought me on here, Letty?"

"The railway cars, I suppose."

"Really! do you think that? How quick you are at guessing, Letty. But what *purpose*, dear Letty, brought me hither, think you?'

"I suppose you are going east to purchase your spring goods."

"What, in *April*. My dear Letty, what *can* you be thinking of? My spring goods were purchased and shipped full two months ago. I was in New York in February for that purpose I had just returned to Iowa City, and was in the midst of the opening and storing, and dropped the whole business into the hands of my clerks, and posted back as fast as I could come; and here I am; now what brought me? Letty, is there nothing in your heart that answers the question?"

Letty shook her head. I know not how it would be with other women of thirty-five in Letty's circumstances; but I know that *she*, in the midst of the strongest, the most tenacious, and most rational attachment that ever lived in woman's heart, felt thoroughly ashamed of it, and numbered herself among the silly,

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sentimental old maids and widows, whom she had seen shown up in satire. The truth is, Letty had ever had a very keen sense of the ridiculous. And now that laughing imp in her heart and eye—with its flaming two-edged sword of sarcasm, which had been the terror of all tenderness of thought in others—had, with poetic justice, turned upon herself. So her head and heart were at great variance, and she could have cried now with the discord they made. We are glad, for her sake, that true Joseph Barton had a healthful and harmonious nature, and so far from reproaching, congratulated himself upon the present event.

"And so you cannot imagine what brought me here, Letty!" he said. "Well, dearest Letty, I must tell you; I came expressly from Iowa, for no other purpose than to see you, and to have a talk with you."

"Then why in the world, Joseph, didn't you come to see me during all these long, long, long years?"

"Did they seem long to you, dear Letty? So they did to me, indeed."

"Thirteen years is an awful chasm in a human life!"

"Why so it is, especially when it opens in the most flowery portion of youth. They don't often send felons to the penitentiary for as long as that!"

"It has ruined our two lives. It were preposterous now to renew—to recall—"

"—*all those blank, dreary years of absence?* Why so it would. 'Let the dead past bury its dead.' 'Let by-gones be by-gones.' 'Forgetting those things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things that are before; let us press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling.'"

"Don't be irreverent, Joseph."

"I'm not. I think that text as good for this world as for the next. There, Letty, you faithless one, I have given you the three highest inspired authorities I know of—poets, children, and Holy Writ. Now, no more dismal looking back. 'Remember Lot's wife.'"

"But you have not told me why in all these years you never came to see us?"

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"You sent me away—why did you never write and give me leave to come back?"

"Oh, I *thought* to do so—I was about to say, a hundred thousand times—but something, I know not what, always restrained me from writing."

"And I thought—*quite* a hundred thousand times of returning, but something—I know *very well* what—restrained *me*."

"What was it?"

"The impression I had, that you were married."

"Oh, Joseph!"

"Yes—and I believed so until last month."

"And how did you find it out at last?"

"By the merest accident, without which I should never have known that you were single, and should not now be here at your side," said Joseph Barton, becoming very grave, as he added—"It is connected with the subject of your—shall I say, our—great loss, Letty."

Her eyes filled at the allusion, and she turned away her head.

"I saw in the newspaper report of the last hours of Daniel Hunter, among the names of those present at his dying bed, that of *his sister, Miss Letitia Hunter!* I set out to seek you, Letty, the very day that I saw that announcement; and here I am."

Poor Letty! how her indignation *had* burned against those intrusive reporters whom she had suspected of noting down everything, from the doctor's prescription to the widow's and orphan's tears. Little had she suspected that they were destined to be the blind instruments in bringing about the denouement of her own little private, impracticable romance.

We must not linger over this re-union. You will have anticipated the result. Joseph Barton was duly presented to the young lady of Howlet Hall, and at her invitation became her guest for several weeks.

And in little more than a year from this time, in the beautiful month of June, two marriages were celebrated, which will require another chapter to describe.

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE WEDDING AND THE HONEYMOON.

> From that day forth, in peace and joyous bliss,
> They lived together long without debate;
> Nor private jars, nor spite of enemies,
> Could shake the safe assurance of their state.—*Spenser's Fairy Queen.*

Joseph Barton arrived in a plain travelling carriage, on the last of May, and on the first of June, Joseph and Letitia were quietly married at the village church; and amid the smiles and good wishes of their friends, they departed for their far western home.

The wedding day of Maud and Falconer was appointed for Thursday, the twenty-first of June—the glorious summer solstice. Had the arrangements been left to the disposition of the beautiful but unassuming young heiress, or her gifted lover—their marriage would have been just as unpretending as that of the Bartons. But the management of the affair rested not with the youthful pair—they had scarcely a voice in the matter. Neither Falconer nor Maud were in the least degree responsible for the splendor that attended their marriage. Falconer, in fact, was in Washington, where he remained until the week of the wedding.

Mrs. Lovel, as the matron nearest of kin to the bride, as well as nearest at hand for the occasion, very properly and rightfully assumed the office of mistress of the ceremonies. Now we all know pretty little Mrs. Lovel's passion for display, and to *that* was due the ostentatious splendor of the preparations. She took her niece to New York, and without the least regard to cost, for the little lady was not drawing upon her own funds, selected a magnificent trouseau, with which was a bridal dress and veil of matchless beauty and splendor, and a set of opals of the purest water. They then returned to Howlet Hall, where Mrs. Lovel remained to superintend affairs until after the mar-

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riage. Months previous she had written to Sir Henry and Lady Percival, advising them of the approaching event, and expressing the great pleasure she should feel could they make a visit and be present at the ceremony. This she had written as a mere form of courtesy, little thinking that her invitation would possibly be accepted. It was, therefore, with as much surprise as pleasure, that upon their return from New York, Mrs. Lovel found a letter from Lady Percival, conveying cordial congratulations to the bride and bridegroom, and announcing the speedy arrival of herself and Sir Henry to assist at the solemnities. The letter was accompanied by a costly and elegant corbeille—the baronet's offering to the bride.

"Friends shower gifts upon me—they overpower me with kindness," said the gentle girl, with tears of sweet emotion in her eyes.

On the Monday of the marriage week Sir Henry and Lady Percival arrived at the Hall, and were most cordially welcomed by Mrs. Lovel, in the name of the youthful lady of the house. And Maud was well pleased that the little bustle of their arrival would subside before the coming of Falconer, who was expected to reach the neighborhood on the twentieth.

Accordingly, on the morning of that day, the guests at the Hall had the thoughtfulness and good nature to keep out of the way, and leave Maud to herself, so that the first meeting of the young pair should be alone.

Without knowing why she was left, Maud was nevertheless very glad to find herself the sole occupant of her drawing-room.

She had attired herself with that poetical beauty which—say as you will—only love can inspire and teach for the beloved one's eyes. Her morning dress was pure and delicate white cambric, slightly edged with the finest lace. Her luxuriant hair of golden auburn fell in resplendent ringlets down her beautiful and blooming face. Expectation had heightened the vivid flush of her cheeks and kindled the brilliant light of her eyes.

And then her heart fluttered in her bosom like a wild bird in its nest, for her spirit perceived almost before her ear heard the coming of her lover.

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There was the quick, light sound of horse's hoofs galloping up to the door—the elastic spring of the rider from the saddle—hurried footsteps up the portico—a word with the servant in waiting at the door—and in another instant Falconer was in the room, and Maud was in his arms, pressed to his bosom—warm heart to heart—flushed cheek to cheek—and the golden ringlets to raven locks. It was a close, silent, impassioned embrace of fervid, pure, young love—a love ineffable and full of joy—a joy too great for speech!

She was the first to recover self-possession—with her beautiful face dyed with blushes, she gently strove to release herself.

And he—with a love too tender to constrain, freed her, still lightly holding one white hand, and gazing with unutterable affection upon her charming downcast face.

And how handsome he looked, with his fine, athletic, yet graceful form, and dark resplendent countenance full of strength and fire.

He spoke first—"Maud! my own Maud! fairest angel! look up! let me see your blessed eyes!"

Smiling a little at his enthusiasm, she lifted her white lids and shot one swift, shy glance into the dark splendor of his eyes, and then dropped them again, in a confusion so beautiful and bewitching that her lover nearly lost his reason, and snatched and strained her to his bosom in a delirium of passionate delight!

Again she extricated herself, suffused with rosy blushes, and he led her to a seat. And there, close to her side, with his arm enfolding her waist, with his other hand clasping her fingers, with his eyes resting in measureless content upon her lovely countenance, and reading there the prophecy of long years of love, and joy unspeakable, he began to pour out the fullness of his heart; to tell her of his infinite affection; of his long and bitter sufferings in the past; of his boundless delight in the present, and his rapturous hopes for the future.

And she spoke of his artist life; of his brilliant success; of the pride and pleasure she took in his growing celebrity, and her perfect faith in his future immortal fame. What joy to hear his praises from her lips! He felt almost overpowered by them; he



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could only raise her hand to his heart, and press it there again and again, murmuring between whiles, "My queen! my queen!" or some other epithet of enthusiastic affection.

When she ceased speaking, he arose, and with a bright smile, took a rich casket from the table, and with a charming blending of deference with playful fondness, dropped upon one knee, and presented it to her, saying,

"Here is the first fruits of my labor, and I lay it at the feet of my liege lady, humbly entreating her acceptance of the poor gift."

It was a magnificent parure of pearls, that a royal bride might have envied. It had taken the whole proceeds of the sale of his greatest works to purchase them. He had condensed, crystalized the labor of years in one costly offering, and laid it at her feet. They represented—not so many thousand vulgar dollars—but painful days and nights of toil and study—glorious days and nights of inspiration!

The worldly, the sordid, the cold and the prudent, might blame this extravagance. So did not Maud, his beautiful bride. The gift touched her heart, as it could not have done, had her bridegroom been a millionaire, who had only drawn a check upon his banker for the price of the jewels. But this was the labor of years. Her eyes filled with tears, her bosom heaved with emotion, and her voice faltered, as in lovely humility she said—"I am not worthy, dearest Falconer; but I accept your precious gift; it is inestimable; its cost cannot be calculated; every gem here stands for days of toil—of an artist's priceless toil! Yes! and priceless love, too. Heaven make me deserving of it!" And she bent forward and clasped her arms around his neck, and dropped her beautiful head upon his shoulder, and wept—such blissful tears! Presently, she lifted her face, all radiant with light and love, and whispered,

"I, too, have a gift for *you*, dearest Falconer; but it is not so precious as yours. Oh! no; not nearly so worthy of your acceptance; for love has not toiled for it!"

And rising, she went to an escrutoire and took out a packet

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tied with red tape, and came up to where he stood, and put it in his hand. He unfolded, and examined it, while she leaned upon his shoulder.

It was a deed of conveyance of Howlet Hall, and the whole of her landed estate, to Falconer O'Leary—regularly and legally drawn up, signed, witnessed, and sealed.

"I had reserved it for to-morrow," she said, simply, "but indeed I could not resist the pleasure of putting it in your hands to-day."

"And you—the richest heiress in the state—have thus conveyed to me the whole of your property, and left yourself penniless!"

"What of that? Are not our interests *one?*" she whispered, shyly—fondly.

"Yes! blessed be Heaven! they *are* one; but *being* one—why did you not keep the estate in your own right; it would have been the same thing, since our interests are inseparable? Answer, love! why?"

"Oh!" said Maud, hiding her blushing face in his bosom, and speaking in the soft low tones of shy devotion, "you do not know a woman's fond doting heart. She does so delight to depend upon her husband; to owe all things to his love; to receive everything from his hand! That is the way with her; *God has made her so!*"

This was a new revelation to Falconer. His face might have been an artist's study for a demi-god's! it was all-glorious with inspiration!—and—"Blessed be God for woman!" he ejaculated. Then disengaging himself from her shy embrace, he tore the deed in fragments and threw it upon the floor.

Maud regarded this sudden change with a look of perplexity and trouble.

But he turned, with a radiant smile, opened his arms, and gathered her to his bosom, saying,

"It was the idea of my taking this patrimony away from you, that kindled my scorn! Dear love! Sweet Maud! it was beautiful—it was lovely in you to offer it, but it would have

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been loathly in me to take it! Sweet Maud! that lovely epithet of endearment suits you yet! Sweet Maud! for you are sweeter than life and immortality to me!"

Now let the worldly wise blame them if they will for that devoted affection, perfect trust, and generous self-abandonment so natural to youth and love—and making such celestial happiness, while it lasts.

At eight o'clock, the next morning, the whole wedding company assembled in the gorgeously furnished saloon of the Hall—the central group—the "cynosure of neighboring eyes," was of course the bridal party. I wish you could have seen the young pair as they stood there in the midst of the superb room, surrounded by the small but splendid company, and waiting to pledge each other those willing vows of love and faith to last through life and—in their hearts they added—beyond death!

Falconer looked handsome, imposing, princely. His dress was of invisible blue cloth, with the coat-facings, the vest, stock, &c., of rich white satin; his fine figure was drawn up to its fullest height; his dark and splendid countenance was irradiated with the love and pride and joy he could not entirely suppress.

And Maud was such a beautiful and peerless bride! She wore a magnificent dress of white brocade, deeply flounced with Brussels lace; the berthe and the sleeve falls of the same trimming. Her rich veil, of ample size and cobweb texture, fell around her beautiful form like a transparent mist; a wreath of orange blossoms crowned her head, and her splendid golden-hued ringlets flashed down each side her blooming cheeks, making a sort of halo around them. Her eyes were fixed upon the ground. Three young ladies, in white satin and white rose wreaths, and three young gentlemen, in the proper wedding dress, officiated as attendants. The Rev. Mr. Lovel performed the ceremony, and Sir Henry Percival gave away the bride. Falconer pronounced his vows in a deep, earnest tone, with his eyes fixed upon his beloved. But Maud's voice faltered very much, and her eyes constantly sought the ground until when she came to be asked—

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"Maud, wilt thou have this man to be thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of matrimony? Wilt thou obey him and serve him, love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health, and forsaking all others, keep thee only unto him as long as ye both shall live?"

Then making a generous effort over herself, she lifted her soul-lit eyes to meet her bridegroom's gaze, and answered, earnestly, "*I will.*"

When the rites were over, Mrs. Lovel lifted the veil from the bride's head, and friends pressed around with congratulations.

A sumptuous breakfast was waiting in the dining-room, to which the company soon repaired. It was a breakfast after the French style, with meats, and game, and pastry, fruits and light wines, &c. And healths were drank, and toasts were proposed, and jests and good wishes and congratulations were passed around, and so the marriage festival came to an end at last.

A superb travelling carriage, drawn by a pair of high-spirited dappled grey horses, stood before the Hall door. And as soon as the bride had changed her wedding dress for a riding habit, the young pair bade adieu to their friends, entered the carriage, and set out upon their bridal tour.

It was to be a very extensive one. They proceeded to New York and embarked for Europe, where they spent several months in travel.

They had thought to glide very quietly and unobtrusively through their continental tour; but everywhere—in all the old cities of the continent, had the young artist's fame preceded him—and in every country, where the love of liberty and the esteem of political righteousness prevailed, was the memory and name of Daniel Hunter, the watchword of the people. And in all places were attention and adulation lavished upon the beautiful young woman—the only daughter of the mighty Daniel Hunter, and the bride of the first sculptor of his time. And everywhere Maud's heart beat high at the honors paid to the memory of her father and the genius of her husband!

They returned to their native country, and reached Washing-



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ton the following January, in the height of the session of Congress and of the fashionable season. Here, also, quietly as they had glided in, they were received with great eclat. The celebrated young sculptor was the lion of the season. The memory of Daniel Hunter was green in the hearts of his countrymen—opposite parties—all parties united now to do his great nature justice—and his only representative—his beautiful daughter, was everywhere attended with the most distinguished honors. Maud once more found herself the reigning queen of the capital, while Falconer was its last and greatest celebrity.

In March, the young pair sought once more their beautiful country seat at Howlet Hollow—for a reason that will soon appear. For in June there was an heir born to the estate—a fine boy, who received in baptism the name of Daniel Hunter. And the happiness of the young couple needed nothing to complete it.

And now, in conclusion, it is only necessary to add, that the neighborhood improvements, which had been projected and commenced by Mr. and Mrs. Hunter, were carried on to completion by the youthful proprietors of Howlet Hollow. Under their auspices, the mountain hamlet of the Summit has sprung up to be one of the most flourishing villages in that section of the country.

And, at this moment, Howlet Hall is the elegant seat of refined hospitality; the honored shrine of genius; and the favored abode of domestic love and bliss.

FINIS.

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T. B. PETERSON, NO. 102 CHESTNUT STREET, PHILADELPHIA, has just published MISS LESLIE'S "NEW RECEIPTS FOR COOKING." It comprises new and approved methods of preparing all kinds of soups, fish, oysters, terrapins, turtle, vegetables, meats, poultry, game, sauces, pickles, sweet meats, cakes, pies, puddings, confectionary, rice, indian meal preparations of all kinds, domestic liquors, perfumery, remedies, laundry work, needle-work, washing thread laces of all kinds, to make them look equal to new, preserving autumn leaves, Chinese embroidery, letters, additional receipts, etc. Also, list of all articles in season suited to go together for breakfasts, dinners and suppers, to suit large or small families, and much useful information and many miscellaneous subjects connected with general housewifery.

This work will have a very extensive sale, and many thousand copies will be sold, as all persons that have had Miss Leslie's former book, entitled "Directions for Cookery," should get this at once, as *all the receipts in this book are new*, and have been fully tried and tested by the author since the publication of her former book, *and none of them whatever are contained in any other work but this.* It is the best, and most complete Cook Book published in the world, as in addition to Cookery, of all kinds and descriptions, its receipts for making cakes and confectionary are unequalled by any other work extant.

It is an elegantly printed duodecimo volume of 520 pages; and in it there will be found *One Thousand and Eleven new Receipts*—all useful—some ornamental—and all invaluable to every lady, miss, or family in the world. *Price One Dollar a copy only.*

Miss Leslie in the preface, says: "A large number of these *new receipts* have been "obtained from the South, and from ladies noted for their skill in housewifery. Many "were dictated by colored cooks, of high reputation in the art, *for which nature seems "to have gifted that race with a peculiar capability.* Some very fine receipts in this col- "lection are of French origin. Their titles are translated into our own language. * * * "The corn meal preparations will be found unusually good, as full directions are given "for every method in which this most valuable and cheap staple can be prepared; and "particularly that for Indian Mush, an article, which, simple as it is, is seldom made "properly, or rather *wholesomely.*

"Since the first appearance of my first book of 'DIRECTIONS FOR COOKING,' I have "obtained new and fresh accessions of valuable knowledge, and new receipts for cooking "not embraced in my former book, connected with the domestic improvement of my "country women, all of which I have been careful to note down, as they presented them- "selves, and to carefully try and have them fully tested, and have now given them all "in this 'NEW RECEIPTS FOR COOKING'—minutely explaining them in language "intelligible to all persons. All I ask, is, that these *new* receipts may be fairly and "faithfully tried, and I trust that no disappointment will happen in the result."

A very important feature in MISS LESLIE'S "NEW RECEIPTS FOR COOKING," will be found in the list of articles in season, which are suited together for Breakfasts, Dinners, Suppers, &c. In it will be found popular and useful suggestions,—of immense value in every household, adding greatly to its convenience, its comfort and economy.

Among its new and valuable receipts will be found one for preserving "*Autumn Leaves*," which will be greatly admired for the brightness, richness and variety of their tints, for our fair Ladies to form into beautiful wreaths for the hair, or trimmings for party and ball dresses, or for adorning and ornamenting picture frames, looking glasses, etc. They are an admirable study for amateurs in painting. One for Chinese Embroidery, by which any person can learn to do embroidery, similar and equal to the finest Canton Crape Shawls, being embroidered on both sides, and both sides being alike.

A copy of this new, popular and celebrated Cook Book, entitled MISS LESLIE' 'NEW RECEIPTS FOR COOKING," will be sent to any person at all, by return of mail, free of postage, on their remitting One Dollar to the publisher, in a letter, post-paid.

Published and for Sale by **T. B. PETERSON,**

18 **No. 102 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.**

**Read the Notices of the Press below.**

# THE FORGED WILL.

## BY EMERSON BENNETT,

AUTHOR OF "CLARA MORELAND," "VIOLA," "PIONEER'S DAUGHTER," ETC.

**Price Fifty Cents in Paper Cover; or, One Dollar in Cloth, Gilt.**

*From a Review of the Work, written by a Celebrated Critic.*

"This is the last great work of Mr. Bennett, and almost universally pronounced his master-piece. The scene is laid in the city of New York, and it accurately shows life in the great metropolis. The scenes are wrought up with great power, and from the first line to the last, the reader is, as it were, held spell-bound by the most intense and thrilling interest. Many of the scenes and characters are drawn from real life. Who does not remember the awful fate of poor HELEN JEWETT, and the trial of ROBINSON for her murder? Their counterpart may be found in Helen Douglass, and Acton Atherton—two characters which figure in this work. It shows you the mansion of the millionaire, and the hovel of poverty; and lays bare crimes of the greatest magnitude, long concealed under the mask of a damnable hypocrisy; it shows the struggles of a young man and his sister, who were once rich, but who were robbed of all their money by the villainy of their uncle, who, living in splendor in the city on his ill-gotten gains, absolutely refuses to give their mother, (his own sister,) money enough to buy food to keep her from dying of starvation. And after she is dead, the unfeeling wretch imprisons his nephew on a false charge of forgery; while his own base son plots the ruin of his cousin, (the young man's sister,) and actually succeeds in entrapping her into a house of bad repute. But, not to enter into detail, we will only add that virtue triumphs in the end, and that villainy meets its just reward. No one can peruse this story without acknowledging it is a powerful work, and calculated to effect great good. The moral of it is unexceptionable, and it should be read by the religious portions of our community as well as by the romance readers. It has already been approved of by the ministers of the Gospel, and by pious members of the church; and the author has been more than once congratulated since its appearance for boldly striking into a new field, and elevating his romance to that high moral standard which makes it unexceptionable to the most virtuous, pure, and refined."

*From the New York International Journal, of Oct. 15th.*

"A native novel, in which the scene is laid in the city of New York, and the incidents detailed with a truthfulness of description which constitutes the great charm of Mr. Bennett's writings. In his previous works, Mr. Bennett has described border life, prairie scenes, and Indian warfare, with a pen so graphic, as to bring the scene bodily before the reader. In 'The Forged Will,' he deals with every day occurrences of domestic town life in the same minute and elaborate way—forcibly reminding us of the descriptions of Bulwer in 'Eugene Aram,' and other works. 'The Forged Will' contains throughout a moral of which the reader is never permitted to lose sight—that crime sooner or later leads to retribution, and that virtue even when exposed to severe trials, eventually receives its reward."

*From the Philadelphia Saturday Courier, of Oct. 15th.*

"Another edition, in so short a time, of this most exciting work, shows the extraordinary interest which it is everywhere exciting, and among all classes of readers. It is truly a most startling and well wrought picture of the great commercial emporium, the city which ranks next to London and Paris in gorgeous profligacy and reckless, squalid crime. New York, with seven hundred thousand inhabitants, its churches, palaces and hovels, is a wonderful city, and Mr. Bennett turns it inside out to the astonished gaze of even its own citizens. Such is the rush for the 'Forged Will,' that on the appearance of the third edition, the enterprising, popular publisher announces his intention of gratifying distant readers, by sending copies through the mail, free of postage, on receipt of fifty cents, the price of the work."

*From the Philadelphia Christian Observer, of Oct. 8th.*

"This is a work of power, a thrilling story of such incidents as occur in real life, portraying the guilty in their relations to the virtuous; deeds of hypocrisy and darkness, concealed for a time, yet meeting with the stern retribution merited. It is a picture, mingling light and shade, and teaches that the triumphing of the wicked is short; and that virtue, though it suffer for a brief season, is sure of a due reward."

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**☞ Copies will be sent to any one, free of postage, on receipt of remittances.**

# THE ROMAN TRAITOR;

OR, THE DAYS OF

## CICERO, CATO AND CATALINE.

## BY HENRY WILLIAM HERBERT,

AUTHOR OF "CROMWELL," "THE BROTHERS," ETC.

### READ THE FOLLOWING OPINIONS OF THE PRESS ABOUT IT.

*From the Philadelphia Saturday Courier, of Sept. 10th, 1853.*

"This historical romance is the most powerfully wrought work which the indomitable genius of the author has ever produced; and is amply sufficient of itself to stamp the writer as a powerful man. The startling schemes and plots which preceded the overthrow of the great Roman Republic, afford ample scope for his well-practised pen, and we may add he has not only been fortunate in producing a work of such masterly pretensions, but Mr. Herbert is equally so in the good taste, energy, and tact of his enterprising publisher. The book is admirably brought out, and altogether may be set down as one of Peterson's 'great hits' in literature."

*From the Philadelphia Daily Pennsylvanian, of Sept. 8th, 1853.*

"The author has made one of his happiest efforts, and given in this volume a tale which will stand the test of the most rigid criticism, and be read by all lovers of literature that embodies the true, the thrilling, the powerful, and the sublime. In fact, we would have thought it impossible to produce such a tale of the Republic in these latter days; but here we have it—Sergius Cataline, Cethegus, Cassius, and the rest of that dark band of conspirators, are here displayed in their true portraits. Those who have read 'Sallust' with care, will recognize the truthful portraiture at a glance, and see the heroes of deep and treacherous villainy dressed out in their proper devil-doing character. On the other hand, we have Cicero, the orator and true friend of the Commonwealth of Rome. We have also his noble cotemporaries and coadjutors, all in this volume. Would that space permitted for a more extended notice, but we are compelled to forbear. One thing is certain—if this book contained nothing more than the story of Paullus Arvina, it would be a tale of thrilling interest."

*From the Cleveland, Ohio, True Democrat, of Sept. 8th, 1853.*

"Those who have perused the former works of this distinguished author, will not fail to procure this book—It is a thrilling romance, and the characters brought forward, and the interest with which they are constantly invested, will insure for it a great run."

*From the Philadelphia City Item, of Sept. 10th, 1853.*

"The Roman Traitor demands earnest commendation. It is a powerful production—perhaps the highest effort of the brilliant and successful author. A thorough historian and a careful thinker, he is well qualified to write learnedly of any period of the world's history. The book is published in tasteful style, and will adorn the centre-table."

*From the Boston Evening Transcript, of Sept. 6th, 1853.*

"This is a powerfully written tale, filled with the thrilling incidents which have made the period of which it speaks one of the darkest in the history of the Roman Republic. The lovers of excitement will find in its pages ample food to gratify a taste for the darker phases of life's drama."

*From the Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch, of Sept. 4th, 1853.*

"Cataline's conspiracy has been selected by Mr. Herbert as the subject of this story. Taking the historical incidents as recorded by the most authentic authors, he has woven around them a net-work of incident, love and romance, which is stirring and exciting. The faithful manner in which the author has adhered to history, and the graphic style in which his descriptions abound, stamp this as one of the most excellent of his many successful novels."

Price for the complete work, in two volumes, in paper cover, One Dollar only; or a finer edition, printed on thicker and better paper, and handsomely bound in one volume, muslin, gilt, is published for One Dollar and Twenty-five Cents.

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# WILD OATS SOWN ABROAD.

**Price Seventy-Five Cents in Cloth, Gilt; or Fifty Cents in Paper Cover.**

**READ THE OPINIONS OF THE PRESS BELOW.**

"This volume is the work of a gentleman of leisure, and, judging from the revelations which he makes, he was educated with 'elegant desires' and sufficient wealth to permit him to indulge his tastes. The sketches which are here collected are marked by spirit, vivacity, and agreeable description. The author writes with the ease of a good, clever fellow, who always looks on the bright side of things, and who endeavors to extract amusement from the most unpromising subjects. His adventures are candidly told, and he leads the reader into many foreign mysteries which most travellers avoid. His style is remarkably easy and flowing. You glide along without an effort, and he manages to keep up an interest which it is the good fortune of few writers to produce. The unknown author has hit the target precisely. Much of the spirit of the late John Sanderson flows from his pen, and his volume will form a delightful sequel to the agreeable book of that pleasant and witty writer."—*Philadelphia Sunday Dispatch.*

"In originality of conception, grace of diction, humor of style—in classic allusion, piquancy, wit, and vivacity, its author stands unrivalled by any 'light' writer, ancient or modern, with whom we are acquainted. Whoever buys the book and reads the opening chapter, we venture to say, would not part with it for ten times its cost, if he could not procure another. We would remark, however, that some portions of the work are more suited for gentlemen readers than for all ladies, from the floridity of the language, though even in its most questionable passages there is a redeeming morality, and a beauty of style and sentiment."—*Philadelphia Saturday Courier.*

"It is certainly a *vivacious* production, and, with some objectionable passages, has many good ones. The writer certainly did not belong to the *melancholy* or *abstemious* school at the time he sketched the scenes and incidents of his travels. He seems to have been deeply imbued at that period with the Byronic temperament, which breathes in almost every line. The same versatile, don't care, dashing and off-hand style which runs through the letters and rhymes of the poet, is discernible in this new but anonymous candidate for public favor."—*Petersburgh (Va.) Intelligencer.*

"The publisher has made an elegant volume of these spicy leaves which have all the pungency of the real 'Fanny Fern,' with the racy, free spirit, that bespeaks the travelled gentleman and the polished wit. Our readers have had repeated 'on and off' specimens of the manner in which these American 'Wild Oats' were sown upon European soil, and have no doubt been heartily amused at the bold, original way in which our gentleman of leisure went over the ground. That there may be no suspicion of partiality towards city customers, Mr. P. is determined to give both town and country a fair show, and so sends copies, *free of postage*, on the receipt of fifty cents. In this way, all can be promptly supplied with the gleanings from the ripe old harvest fields, where love and philosophy, in sked halls, and monasteries. London sights, Parisian charms and Italian romance, flourish in rich luxuriance."—*Philadelphia Saturday Courier.*

Copies of either edition of the work will be sent to any person at all, to any part of the United States, free of postage, on their remitting the price of the edition they wish, to the publisher, in a letter, post paid.

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# THE INITIALS:

**Complete in two vols., paper cover, Price One Dollar; or bound in one volume, cloth. Price $1.25 a copy.**

**Read the following Reviews of it, written by two celebrated Critics.**

T. B. PETERSON has just published this celebrated work, whose reputation in England and Germany already excels that of any novel written since the days of Sir Walter Scott. The heroine, Hildegarde, is one of the loveliest creations of fiction. From the first moment she appears on the scene to the final termination of the story, she engrosses the entire sympathies of the reader, who breathlessly follows her fluctuating fortunes, the alienation of her lover, and her heroic sacrifice of herself. The "Initials" is one of those rare things, *a love-story true to life;* for while there is nothing mawkishly sentimental about it, it fairly runs over with the poetry of youth and romance. As a picture of social life in Germany, it is invaluable. Nobody but one who had lived for years in that country could have drawn the manners, habits, and customs of the Germans so faithfully. The "Initials" is destined to become a standard work, and will be read long after the ephemeral fictions of the day are forgotten; for while it equals them in the absorbing character of its incidents, it excels them immeasurably in chasteness of style, purity of morals, and fidelity to nature. The author is a lady of high rank in both England and Germany, being the daughter of a Lord High Chancellor of Great Britain, and the wife of a German nobleman.

"This is one of those novels which will continue to be read, like those of Scott, and other great masters of fiction, long after the generation which saw it first has mouldered in the dust. The scene is laid in Germany. The fair author is a daughter of the celebrated Lord Erskine, formerly Lord High Chancellor of England. Educated in Great Britain, but since her marriage to a German nobleman, living on the continent, she depicts life in Germany with rare fidelity, though without falling into that mawkish sentimentalism which is the fault of native-born novelists. In the whole realm of modern fiction there is not a more lovely creation than Hildegarde, the heroine. Her conduct under the most trying circumstances, is ever noble; but ever also natural to her character. The charm of this novel, indeed, is that while it has nothing forced or exaggerated about it, it is nevertheless full of romance. Everything happens as it ought to happen, yet the incidents are never strained, nor the actors made to belie their natures. To read 'The Initials' is to call back the days of one's youth, when the future was rosy with hope, and when all things were fresh and beautiful. The work is eminently instructive. It has already run through several editions in England, and is destined, we predict, to have an unparalleled sale here. We know no fiction, in fact, which we would sooner recommend, for while it will fascinate all who read merely for amusement, it will delight as well as improve those who seek for something even in a novel."—*Ladies' National Magazine.*

Copies of either edition of the work will be sent to any person, to any part of the United States, *free of postage*, on their remitting the price of the edition they may wish, to the publisher, in a letter, post-paid.

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EVER PUBLISHED OF

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**T. B. PETERSON, No. 102 Chesnut Street, Philadelphia,** PUBLISHES THIS DAY the above Portrait, and most respectfully dedicates it to the People of the United States, and is truly proud to be able to present to the American People, so true, so faithful, so superb a memorial of the noble Statesman, for whose death a nation mourns.

This beautiful picture of *HENRY CLAY* was painted by the celebrated JOHN NEAGLE, on HENRY CLAY's farm at Ashland, Kentucky. It is full-length, and represents him surrounded with the implements of AGRICULTURE, MANUFACTURES, COMMERCE, and the ARTS, and in the well-known attitude he always assumed when addressing the Senate and the People. The graceful folds of the American Flag, to the right of the figure, lends a beauty, and makes this splendid Mezzotinto Engraving not only the best likeness of HENRY CLAY in existence, but one of the most beautiful pictures in the world.

It is a very large Picture, Engraved by JOHN SARTAIN, ESQ., and is sold at the low price of One Dollar and Fifty Cents a copy.

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PORTRAIT OF HENRY CLAY.—"We have received from the publisher an admirable full-length portrait of Henry Clay, engraved by Sartain, from a picture painted at Ashland, by Neagle, in 1843. No likeness that we have seen of the illustrious statesman does better justice to the peculiar expression of his features, and we believe that it will be eagerly sought by his admirers throughout the country who desire to possess a suitable memorial of the departed chief. It is published by T. B. Peterson, Philadelphia."—*New York Daily and Weekly Tribune, Edited by Horace Greeley, Esq.*

"The best portrait of Henry Clay extant, has been published by T. B. Peterson, No. 98 Chesnut street. It is a superb mezzotint, from Neagle's celebrated picture, giving the full length of the great statesman and patriot, and is sold at an exceedingly low rate. The Engraving may be had on thick plate paper, framed or without a frame. Every American, without distinction of party, should have a copy of the picture."—*Philad'a. Evening Bulletin.*

"Mr. T. B. Peterson has just published a splendid full-length portrait of Henry Clay. It is from Neagle's celebrated painting. The likeness is remarkably striking, the attitude easy, natural and graceful, and the effect throughout is impressive and pleasing. The many admirers of the great statesman should hasten and obtain copies. The price is quite low."—*Philadelphia Daily Inquirer.*

"The best portrait of Henry Clay yet published, is that published by Peterson, Chesnut street, above Third. It is from the original by Neagle, a most superb article, far surpassing the miserable catch-penny of Root. The price is One Dollar and a Half. Every admirer of the great Statesman should possess one of these life-like portraits."—*Daily True American.*

OUR LAMENTED STATESMAN, HENRY CLAY.—"Mr. T. B. Peterson, 98 Chesnut street, is publishing a full-length portrait of Mr. Clay, which we have no doubt will be extensively patronized. It is from the celebrated painting by Neagle, and it is sufficient to say, of the mezzotint engraving, in which the portrait appears, that it is by Sartain, beyond all question the most finished and masterly artist in that line of which this country has any knowledge. The price of this splendid portrait has been put down by the publisher at a rate sufficiently low to ensure it a hearty welcome in every American mansion."—*Philadelphia Saturday Courier.*

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OR,

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"We consider this altogether the best fiction which Mr. Bennett has yet written. In saying this, we pay him the highest possible compliment, as he has long been one of the most popular of American Novelists. His publisher has done every thing that was possible to add to the public desire for the work, having issued it in a very handsome style, so that its dress might not disgrace its merits. Clara Moreland is destined to have an immense sale."—*Ladies National Magazine.*

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# A NEW COOK BOOK, BY MISS LESLIE, FOR THE MILLION.

# MISS LESLIE'S

# "NEW RECEIPTS FOR COOKING."

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"This is a large, well-bound volume of over five hundred pages, and includes in it over one thousand receipts never before published in any of Miss Leslie's other works, accompanied by a well-arranged index, by which any desired receipt may be turned to at once. The receipts are for cooking all kinds of meats, poultry, game, pies, &c., with directions for confectionery, ices and preserves. It is entirely different from any former work by Miss Leslie, and contains new and fresh accessions of useful knowledge. The merit of these receipts is, that they have all been tried, and therefore can be recommended conscientiously. Miss Leslie has acquired great reputation among housekeepers for the excellence of her works on cookery, and this volume will doubtless enhance it. It is the best book on cookery that we know of, and while it will be useful to matrons, to young housewives we should think it quite indispensable. By the aid of this book, the young and inexperienced are brought nearly on a footing with those who have seen service in the culinary department, and by having it at hand are rendered tolerably independent of *help*, which sometimes becomes very refractory. The best regulated families are sometimes taken a little by surprise by the untimely stopping in of a friend to dinner—to such Miss Leslie is the friend indeed, ready as her book is with instructions for the hasty production of various substitutes for meals requiring timely and elaborate preparation. The book is not, however, wholly confined to receipts in cooking. A fair proportion of the volume is devoted to useful information on all subjects whatever connected with general housewifery: the preservation of health, and the cleansing and keeping of articles of wearing apparel."—*Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper, April* 26, 1854.

"Miss Leslie's New Receipts for Cooking all kinds of meats, poultry, game, pies, &c., with directions for confectionery, ices and preserves, has been published by T. B. Peterson. It is entirely different from any former work by Miss Leslie, and contains new and fresh accessions of useful knowledge. The merit of these receipts is that they have all been tried, and therefore can be recommended conscientiously. Miss Leslie has acquired great reputation among housekeepers for the excellence of her works on cookery, and this volume will doubtless enhance it. It is the best book on cookery that we know of."—*Philadelphia Public Ledger, April* 21, 1854.

"We do not claim to be deeply versed in the art of cookery; but a lady, skilled in the art, to whom we have submitted this work, assures us that there is nothing like it within the circle of her knowledge; and that having this, a housekeeper would need no other written guide to the mysteries of housekeeping. It contains over 1,000 new receipts, which the author has fully tried and tested; and they relate to almost every conceivable dish—flesh, fish and fowl, soups, sauces, and sweetmeats; puddings, pies and pickles; cakes and confectionery. There are, too, lists of articles suitable to go together for breakfasts, dinners and suppers, at different seasons of the year, for plain family meals, and elaborate company preparations; which must be of great convenience. Then there are directions pertaining to the manufacture and care of household articles, embracing laundry work, needle work, care of furniture, furs, woolens, manufacture of various articles of use about a house, or in traveling, directions for preparing for a journey, a sea-voyage, &c., &c. Indeed, there appears to be, as our lady friend remarked, everything in this book that a housekeeper need to know; and having this book she would seem to need no other to afford her instruction about housekeeping."—*Boston Evening Traveler, April* 25, 1854.

"This handsome volume contains ample and important instructions for those who would understand the culinary art—an art practised, or abused, every day, in every household. It is a sequel to Miss Leslie's old book, called "Directions for Cookery," and comprises a very large number of receipts, many of them from ladies at the South, and others from France, furnishing specific directions for the preparation of every good thing for an elegant table, and also for all such articles as are required in families that live well, but moderately."—*Christian Observer, April* 29, 1854.

A copy of this new, popular and celebrated Cook Book, entitled "MISS LESLIE'S NEW RECEIPTS FOR COOKING," will be sent to any person at all, by return of mail, free of postage, on their remitting One Dollar to the publisher, in a letter, post-paid.

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# MISS LESLIE'S

# "NEW RECEIPTS FOR COOKING."

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